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SIGNS AND WONDERS



OBELISK AT ON, OR HELIOPOLIS.

SIGNS AND WONDERS
IN THE LAND OF HAM

A DESCRIPTION OF
THE TEN PLAGUES OF EGYPT
*WITH ANCIENT AND MODERN PARALLELS
AND ILLUSTRATIONS*

BY
THOMAS S. MILLINGTON
VICAR OF WOODHOUSE EAVES

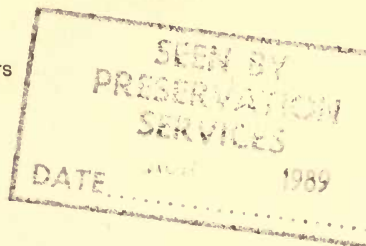
"Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost."

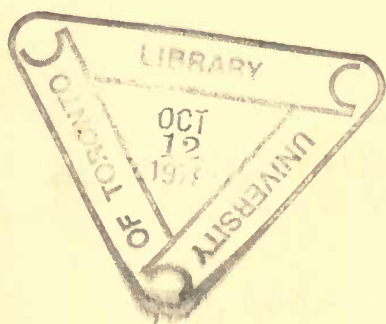
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WITH MANY WOODCUTS

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PREFACE.



IT has been said that "the use of language is to conceal the thoughts." The Egyptians represented their god of speech holding a seal-ring to his lips as if in approval of this doctrine. It may with equal truth be affirmed that the use of history is often to conceal facts; and such appears to have been the object of those ancient chroniclers who wrote with a pen of iron upon the monuments of Egypt the supposed annals of their country. Numberless are the inscriptions, paintings, sculptures, and papyri, which have been discovered and interpreted by modern enterprise and scholarship; yet in none of these is any direct allusion, far less any descriptive account, to be found of the most wonderful series of events that ever came to pass in Egypt,—namely, the Ten Plagues which preceded the Exodus of Israel.

The priests of Egypt were the guardians, and, to a certain extent, the manufacturers, of its history. Herodotus derived his information

from the priests (Clio. c. 55, 100, 107, 113, 118, etc). Diodorus Siculus says—"The priests keep registers in their temples of all their kings for many generations past, to what greatness and majesty every one of them arrived, what were their particular tempers and inclinations, and their actions in their several times" (Hist. l. 1. c. 44). The same writer, speaking of the earliest traditions of Egypt, affirms—"The priests, who were secretly instructed in the perfect knowledge of these matters, would not suffer them to be spread abroad for fear of the punishments to which those who revealed the secrets of the gods were liable" (l. 1. c. 27). The Egyptians professed, indeed, to have a great regard for truth; and any flagrant departure from it was according to their code a criminal offence; but those who made and administered the laws were not necessarily bound by them; and expediency was the first consideration, especially in the interests of religion. Falsehood is commended in the Koran, if practised with a good intention or against an enemy; and it is probable that in Ancient, as in Modern Egypt, veracity was more highly esteemed in theory than in practice.

It was evidently the business of the priests to publish or conceal, to preserve or to sup-

press, at their discretion, such facts as came to their knowledge. All, therefore, that could exalt their religion or gratify their national vanity was displayed in exaggerated terms; while the reverses and humiliations which they suffered, and especially those which, like the Ten Plagues, brought disgrace upon their deities, were either passed over in silence, or so treated as to convey to future generations impressions entirely at variance with the truth.

Thus, while it is perfectly certain that the events described by Moses did occur, and were known and felt throughout all the land of Egypt, no distinct traces of them are to be found upon the monuments of that country; nor is it possible to ascertain from such sources either the period when they took place, the name of the Pharaoh who suffered under the infliction, nor even the dynasty which then prevailed.

The inspired account of this blank in Egyptian history is brief; it is a history, not of Egypt, but of Israel; and the point of view from which it is taken is very different from that which an independent historian would have assumed. It was intended chiefly for the Jews, as a memorial of great and solemn events with which they were already acquainted, "*et quorum pars magna fuerunt:*" it touched therefore only

upon those prominent facts of the history which possessed a peculiar and national interest, and which were to be handed down from generation to generation of the Israelites, as arguments to quicken their devotion towards God, and to remind them of their obligations as his people. Yet even this cursory account is such as no one who was not intimately and personally acquainted with the history, institutions, and habits of the Egyptians, and also with the natural features, productions, and general characteristics of their country, could possibly have written. It bears, in every line, the stamp of truth, told by an eyewitness; it makes mention, as if accidentally, of numberless little circumstances which prove to be in perfect harmony with all that is known, from other sources, of the actual condition of the Egyptians and their country at that period, and which none but a writer thoroughly, and as it were unconsciously, familiar with the subject, could have introduced.

Profane history also confirms the inspired account to a remarkable extent, though of course indirectly. In the earliest times foreigners were not allowed to penetrate into the interior of Egypt, or to become acquainted with its history; but this rule was, at a later period, relaxed.

Sufficient opportunity was then afforded to observe the customs of the people, and to study their religion and philosophy; and the writings of Herodotus, Plato, Diodorus, Strabo, and other witnesses, furnish many interesting parallels and illustrations to the narrative of Moses.

As the history of a nation or an epoch may be collected from the coins and fragments discovered at various times, and in places far apart, so this portion of Egyptian history, purposely suppressed, and, as it were, buried by the priests, is confirmed in its chief facts and explained in many of its details by the fragmentary records of ancient writers, and by the sculptures, paintings, and inscriptions, which are from time to time discovered and deciphered. The object of the following pages is to gather up these scattered fragments, and to show their general bearing upon the distinct line of facts recorded in the book of Exodus; arranging them as a consistent, although sometimes conjectural, background to the more prominent figures and events delineated and described by Moses. And this has been done in the conviction that the whole will answer the important end of confirming and elucidating the sacred narrative.

The author is indebted to the annotator on the Book of Exodus in the Speaker's Commentary, and to other writers, for some quotations, which are acknowledged wherever they occur. Most of the woodcuts are from Sir J. Gardner Wilkinson's "Manners and Customs of the Ancient Egyptians."

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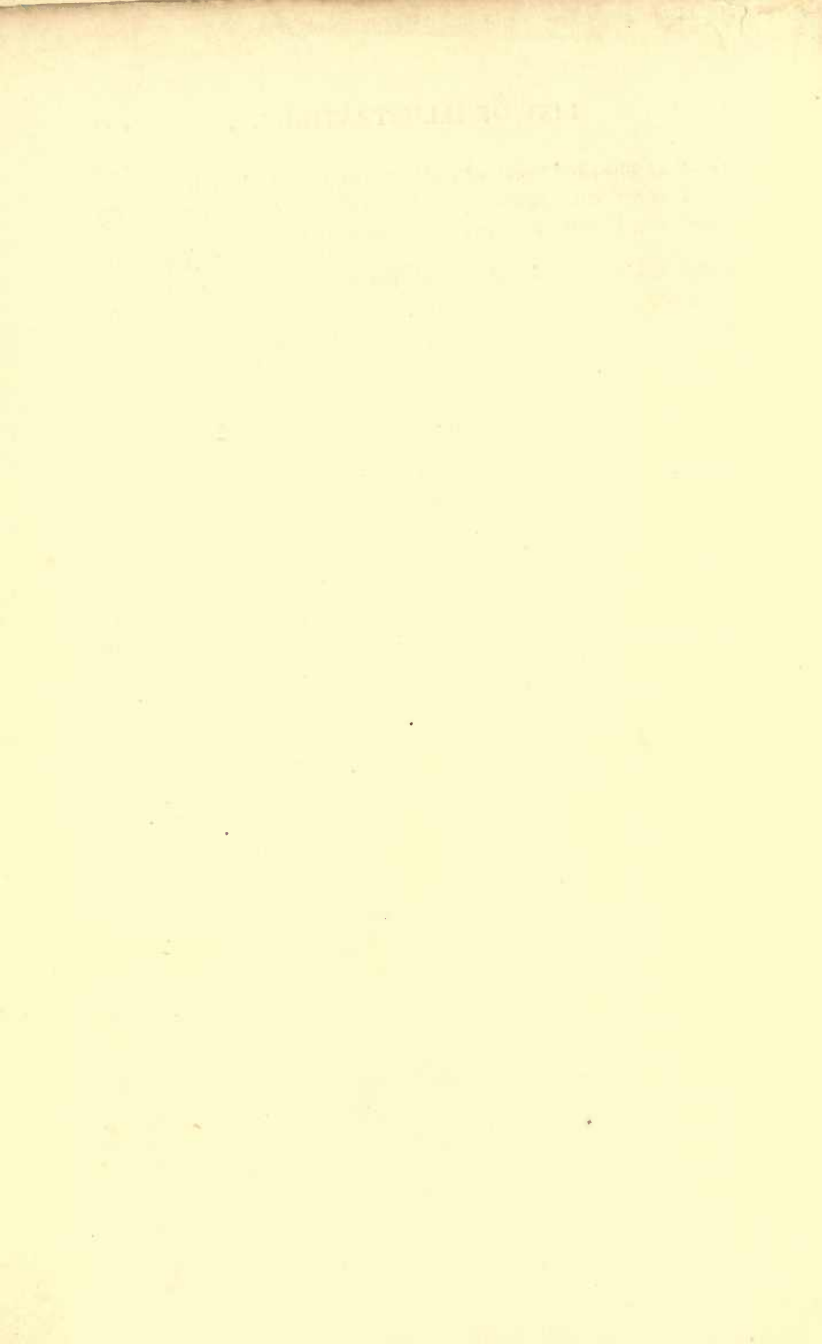
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SIGNS AND WONDERS.

CHAPTER I.

THE CALL OF MOSES.

The plagues of Egypt—Their meaning and emphasis as signs, for the Egyptians, for the Israelites—Moses as an historian—Moses in Egypt, in Horeb—The burning bush—Meaning of the name I AM—The eternity of the Godhead—Opinions of the Egyptians and of the Greeks on this subject—Sun-worship.

THE history of the ten plagues of Egypt is given in the book of Exodus as a brief narrative of facts, almost without comment. This simple, unaffected manner of writing, which pervades all the historical books of the Old Testament, has been cited among the internal evidences of the genuineness of the story. A series of wonderful events, affording unlimited scope for picturesque, or even sensational, description, are here set down in the shortest form and in the plainest language. There is a consciousness of reality, a dignity of truth, throughout. The incidents recorded were within the memory of the Jewish people, to whom they were, immediately and chiefly, interesting, as being at the base of their national life and polity; and they are treated accordingly, by the inspired penman, as truths of universal acceptance, requiring neither embellishment nor explanation.

But, apart from its connection with Jewish history this portion of Holy Scripture derives another and a peculiar interest from the accidents of time and place to which it refers ; and in order to understand these, we must avail ourselves of the information afforded by the writings of profane historians, and by other monuments of antiquity. A careful and reverent comparison of the Bible narrative with the accounts derived from these sources of the customs and superstitions of Egypt, will show that in each of the ten plagues there was a distinct meaning or emphasis, which could not fail, at the time, to be recognised. Such a review will enable us not only to apprehend the real nature, object, and extent of each of the several judgments, but also to form some idea of the effect which they produced upon the minds, both of the Egyptians who suffered, and of the Israelites who witnessed them.

There is a purpose of mercy in all God's chastisements, and those recorded here are no exception to the rule. The warnings given in nearly every instance before the plague was inflicted, and its speedy removal upon the first appeal for mercy, the pause and conference which took place between the several visitations, and the number and gradually increasing severity of the strokes which preceded the final catastrophe, all point to the conclusion, that if Egypt would have listened to the warning voice—if Pharaoh and his people would have laid to heart the lessons which these judgments were intended to convey, they might have escaped the great calamity which overtook them in the end : but “he that, being often

reproved, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy" (Prov. xxix. 1). Or, if we incline to the belief that the fate of Egypt was determined before these plagues were sent upon her, the measure of her iniquity being already full, then we may see how God intended, by such extraordinary examples of severity and justice, to instruct his own people Israel. They had become habituated, in this land of their bondage, to the vices and superstitions which were continually before their eyes, and in many of which they shared. God, who as he putteth down one setteth up another, would give to this nation, whom he was now about to establish in their promised land, such a lesson as should never be forgotten—displaying his righteous indignation against all forms of wickedness, and visiting each instance of profanity with a punishment so appropriate and distinctive in its kind as to be recognised beyond all doubt as the work of his own hand. These judgments were in themselves so remarkable that they must have claimed attention in any place and among any people; but in the land of Egypt there was a peculiar significance attached to them, which the Jews at least would recognise and remember, as tokens of the power and justice of their God.

The following chapters are intended to show, partly upon the testimony of ancient records, and partly by comparison with incidental statements in the inspired volume, the appropriateness of each plague as a punishment or reproof for some notorious vice which called for it. God does nothing without cause. The causes of these terrible plagues were well understood by the

Egyptians ; but they may more easily escape our notice, looking back, as we do, upon the events from so great a distance of time, and with so imperfect a knowledge of the contemporaneous history of that people. In the 12th chapter of Exodus God himself declares one object which he had in view : "Against all the gods of Egypt will I execute judgment : I am the Lord." This purpose is apparent throughout the whole history of these stupendous visitations. They were designed not only as punishments for wickedness and vice, but as reproofs against idolatry. God has here a controversy with his creatures. The great I AM displays his majesty and power in contrast with the insignificance of those objects which the Egyptians worshipped in his stead ; and the plagues of Egypt stand forth in all ages as a protest against the abominable folly of a sensual and idolatrous religion, which changes the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds and four-footed beasts, and to creeping things, and worships and serves the creature more than the Creator, who is God over all, blessed for ever.

In following this line of inquiry, many lessons of practical instruction, and many occasions of pious meditation, will necessarily present themselves. The history of the Exodus is frequently referred to, both in the Old and New Testaments, and contains the germs of many spiritual truths of the deepest interest to the Church of God throughout all ages. Those who study it in faith and earnestness will find it full of interest ; they will bring out of it, as from the householder's

treasury, things new and old, things which may be useful to them both for life and doctrine.

The greater part of the book of Exodus may be regarded as an autobiography. Moses here relates the history of his own doings. In the book of Genesis he had written the life of Abraham, of Isaac, of Jacob, and of many other of God's servants. Now that his own turn is come, he writes down, with equal simplicity and faithfulness, the record of his own life and times. His faults and errors, his infirmities and fears, are all related in this book without extenuation or excuse; and at the same time, his wonderful achievements his labours, his boldness, and his perseverance, are described without conceit or boasting. It is Moses who writes, but Moses the servant of the Lord. He cannot but declare the things which he has seen and heard; and he cannot go beyond the Word of the Lord to set down more or less. He writes as he is moved by the Holy Ghost. The meekness and simplicity with which Moses describes his miraculous achievements are the more remarkable when contrasted with the inflated and vainglorious style to which the Egyptians, whom in the end he overthrew, were accustomed. Diodorus the Sicilian tells us, in his description of Egypt (l. i. c. 47), of an enormous statue of one of their kings (the foot of which exceeded seven cubits in length), bearing this inscription: "I am Osimanduas, king of kings. If any one would know how great I am, let him surpass me in any one of my works." The same writer mentions the two pillars set up by Sesosis in Thrace to commemorate his victories

there, and inscribed by his orders with Egyptian hieroglyphics to the following effect: "Sesoosis, king of kings, and lord of lords, subdued this country by his arms" (l. i. c. 55).

Moses was eighty years old at the time of his call. His life appears to have been divided into three periods of forty years each. The first forty were spent at the court of Pharaoh, where he lived as a prince; the second forty were passed in the desert, as a shepherd; and the third forty with Israel in the wilderness. During the first period he had everything that the world could offer to make him happy, being educated as the son of Pharaoh's daughter, and surrounded with all the pleasures and indulgences that the most luxurious court in the world could afford. He was learned, also, in all the wisdom of the Egyptians; and Egypt was at that time the most advanced of all nations in every kind of knowledge.

Notwithstanding these advantages, he appears to have cherished in his heart a brotherly affection for the Israelites, whose misery and degradation he witnessed daily, and in whom he did not fail to recognise his own kith and kin. It was his custom to go out to his brethren, and to look upon their burdens, meditating probably in his heart what power or influence it might be possible for him to exercise for their relief. On one of these occasions "he spied an Egyptian smiting an Hebrew;" smiting him unmercifully or unjustly, otherwise an incident of such common occurrence would not have affected him so strongly. It was a proverbial saying in Egypt, "The child grows

up, and his bones are broken like the bones of an ass;" and again, "The back of a lad is made that he may hearken to him that beats it." The discipline of the Egyptians, both in civil and military services, among freemen as well as slaves, was maintained by punishments of great severity. The man who was beating an Hebrew was probably one of the overseers or taskmasters, who were usually armed with heavy scourges made of tough pliant wood, and were not lenient in the use of them, especially towards strangers, whom they hated. Moses, indignant at this act of cruelty, looked this way and that, and seeing no man near, slew the Egyptian, and delivered him that was oppressed. "He supposed also that his brethren would have understood how that God, by his hand, would deliver them; but they understood not" (Acts vii. 25).

"He that wilfully killed a freeman, or even a slave, was, by the law of Egypt, to die:" so says Diodorus Siculus (l. i. c. 77); not only so, but "if, upon the road, any one saw a man likely to be killed, or violently assaulted, and did not rescue him if he were able, he must himself suffer death; or if he could not rescue him, then he must discover the offender, and prosecute him in due course of law. A witness who should fail to do this was liable to be scourged, and kept for three days without food."

Moses, therefore, finding that the thing was known, and anticipating the punishment, from which no rank was exempt, fled from Egypt, and dwelt in the land of Midian, where he fed the flock of Jethro, whose daughter he presently married. This was a poor

employment for a man of Moses' education and refinement; but "sweet are the uses of adversity;" and here it was that he acquired those lessons of humility and patience, for which, though evidently not in harmony with his natural character, he was so remarkable in after life. "The man Moses was very meek, above all the men that were upon the face of the earth" (Num. xii. 3). Before, in Egypt, he had shown his zeal for the Lord by slaying the oppressor; now he learnt to distrust his own powers, and to await the course of events as God should order them; and for forty years he continued in the desert or wilderness fulfilling his humble destiny as shepherd of Jethro's flock.

It was, and still is, customary with the shepherds of that country to drive their herds at the approach of summer from the open plains to the well-watered and cooler districts of the mountains. David gives utterance to the feelings of a true shepherd in many places of the Psalms, as for instance in the 104th—"He sendeth springs into the valleys which run among the hills; they give drink to every beast of the field; the wild asses quench their thirst. He watereth the hills with his chambers." It was the recollection of many peaceful hours spent among his flocks in the solitude of the mountain glens that inspired him in the description of a good man's happiness and safety. "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in pastures of tender grass: he leadeth me beside the waters of quietness" (Ps. xxiii., marginal reading). Seeking

such refreshment for his sheep and goats, Moses led them at the usual season to the mountain of God, even to Horeb.

In that retirement God appeared to him. He called him, as he afterwards called David, from the sheep-fold, and from following the ewes great with young, to lead and govern his people. Moses had been faithful in a few things, and he was now made ruler over much. He was at this time eighty years of age, but hale and strong; for even forty years later, after all the troubles and fatigues which he had undergone in the wilderness, "his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated" (Deut. xxxiv. 7).

It has been supposed that "the angel of the Lord" which appeared to Moses in the burning-bush was God himself, the second person of the Holy Trinity. The inspired account affords some ground for this opinion; for it is said, "God called unto him out of the bush" (Exod. iii. 4); and throughout the remainder of the interview it is "the God of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob," the great "I AM," who speaks to him. "The angel of the Lord," then, may signify the Angel of the Covenant, the Word of God; or if he were a created angel, then he was one sent before to prepare the way of the Lord, by warning Moses of the great and awful presence in which he was about to appear.

The bush burned with fire. God is often likened to a flame. When Israel's deliverance out of Egypt was first promised, more than 400 years earlier, to Abraham, it was under a similar figure that God

declared himself. "An horror of great darkness fell upon Abraham" (Gen. xv. 12); a type of the misery and ignorance of his descendants under Egyptian bondage; and then a burning lamp or light was seen passing between the parts of his sacrifice; after which God spake to Abraham, and promised deliverance to his seed. The time was now at hand when this promise was to be fulfilled, and God appeared again to Moses as a burning light.

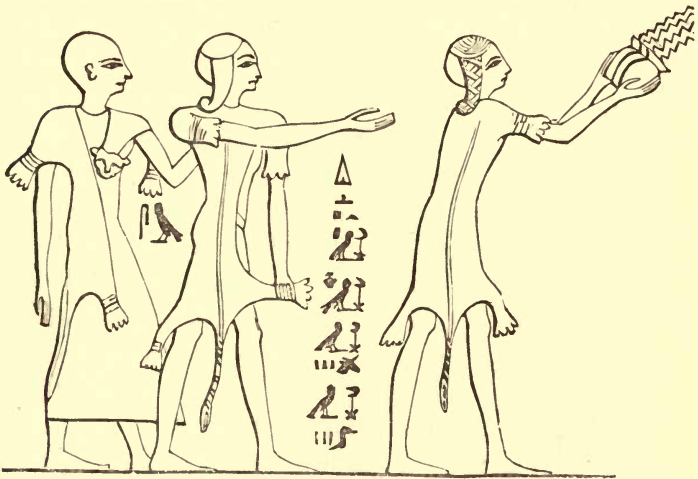
The bush, though wrapped in flames, was not consumed—an emblem, perhaps, of the power of God dwelling in men's hearts. God was now calling Moses to a work in which he was to exercise divine energy, and to work miracles: in all the signs and wonders which he was to perform, the omnipotence of God would be displayed, though at the word and by the hand of a man; and Moses was to be the vehicle of this divine impulse, and, like the bush possessed by the flame, to continue unconsumed. It may serve also as a type of the church throughout all time, and of the protection which the presence of God affords under all persecutions. The Israelites were preserved in the brick-kilns of Egypt, and, in spite of Pharaoh's cruelties, multiplied exceedingly. The three children, in Daniel's day, were preserved in the midst of the burning fiery furnace, so that not an hair of their head was singed. For the wicked, God is a consuming fire; but his own people are not consumed. When God visits Sodom and Gomorrah for their sins, they are burned and destroyed; but when he chastens his own church and people, they come

forth unharmed : "The light of Israel shall be for a fire, and his^h holy one for a flame ; and it shall burn and devour his thorns and his briers in one day" (Isaiah x. 17). The thorns and the briers are indeed consumed ; but the church of Christ walks through the fire, and is not burned, neither doth the flame kindle upon her.

Moses, when he beheld the flame of fire in the bush, said, I will now turn aside and see this great sight, why the bush is not burned. He recognised the sign of God's presence, and gave himself to observe it. If he had begun to philosophise after the fashion of those Chaldæans and Egyptians in whose wisdom he was instructed, or of those modern sceptics who judge all things by their own reason, he would perhaps have said that the fire was a meteor, and the angel a phantom of the imagination or a mirage of the desert, and so he might have turned his back upon it, and gone on feeding sheep as before ; but when the Lord saw that he turned aside reverently to consider this great sight, he spoke to him and called him by his name, and commanded him, "Draw not nigh hither ; put off thy shoes from off thy feet ; for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground" (Exod. iii. 5).

This was in accordance with the custom by which respect was shown to sacred things in those days. Pythagoras taught that the gods were to be worshipped, and sacrifices offered, with the feet naked. A picture found at Herculaneum represents worshippers with naked feet before the Egyptian deity Isis. Ovid speaks of "a sacred grove not to be ap-

proached with covered feet" (Fast. l. vi. v. 411). Strabo describes a similar practice among the Germans; and even to this day it prevails, as is well known, among Oriental nations.



Egyptian Priests offering incense with naked feet.—WILKINSON.

In Egyptian houses one end of the principal apartment is raised, and covered with a mat in summer, and with a carpet over the mat in winter; this is called the leewán. Every person slips off his shoes before he steps upon the leewán; and the reason of this custom is, that he may avoid defiling with his sandals a mat or carpet upon which prayer is usually made.—Lane's *Modern Egyptians*.

Such outward gestures are only pleasing to the Lord as tokens of genuine humility and reverence. "Moses," we are told, "hid his face, for he was afraid

to look upon God." Stephen yet more emphatically says, "Then Moses trembled, and durst not behold" (Acts vii. 32). God now declared himself: "I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. Come now, I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt."

Here is enunciated one of the most important doctrines of the Christian faith—viz. the resurrection of the dead. The Egyptians believed in the immortality of the soul, and future rewards and punishments. These truths remained to them from primeval revelation, but they had mixed up with them strange errors and inventions. They taught that the spirit of a man entered, after death, into the body of one of the lower animals, or into several of them in succession, and that, after a variety of adventures, it returned to its original form, accomplishing this cycle in the space of 3000 years. Hence their careful embalming and preservation of their dead, and the magnitude and solidity of the sepulchres in which they laid them up. God now declared to Moses the true doctrine of the resurrection, as is plainly signified by our blessed Saviour's argument in the New Testament (Luke xx. 37). "Now that the dead are raised, even Moses shewed at the bush. As touching the resurrection, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living." Here, then, is the doctrine of man's immortality, divested of all human traditions, set forth

to Moses under the law, and afterwards unfolded and explained by Him whose office it was to bring life and immortality to light through the gospel.

And, unless there had been such a future state of existence, it could hardly be said that God had fulfilled the promises made to the patriarchs. For Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, never possessed in this world the things which God had covenanted to bestow upon them. They "died in faith, not having received the promises" (Heb. xi. 13). Even that Canaan to which their children were brought was but a type of a much better country reserved for them after death; and the Jews understood it to be so, for St. Paul says: "We have hope toward God that there shall be a resurrection of the dead; unto which promise our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come" (Acts xxvi. 7).

Moses, notwithstanding the encouragement thus given to him, is afraid to undertake the duty to which God calls him. "Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh," he replies, "and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt? Behold, they will not believe me, nor hearken to my voice." God repeats the assurance: "Certainly I will be with thee." But Moses is still unpersuaded. He doubts whether Israel will recognise the God of their fathers, having been so long aliens from him in the land of Egypt: "When I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say unto me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them? And God said

unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM : Thus shalt thou say unto the 'children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you " (Exod. iii. 13).

This is a name full of the deepest meaning, which meaning, as will presently be shown, the Egyptians could, to a certain extent, appreciate and understand. It asserts the self-existence, the eternity, and the immutability of the Deity. Only God can say I AM. His creatures are not, except as he gives them life and keeps them living. We are what God has made us, what he enables us to be. He is that He is, the only self-existing, self-upholding Being, God over all and in all. I AM expresses also the eternity of the Godhead—that was, and is, and is to come. Past and future are included in this name ; or, rather, there can be no past nor future in respect of God. His years are not spent, as ours are, like a tale that is told. In his existence there is neither beginning nor end ; nothing transitory or successive ; nothing bygone or to come. His duration is a simple and eternal *now*. Before his sight all things, past, present, and to come, are constantly outspread. God "inhabiteth eternity:" as he fills all space, and is everywhere present, so he fills all time, not passing through it, but dwelling in every part of it. Before all worlds HE IS : now while we speak of him HE IS ; and hereafter, in that eternity on which we all shall enter, HE already IS. By this name the immutability of the Godhead likewise is declared, "I AM THAT I AM." What God is now he has always been and always will be. With him is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. Change is

a consequence of imperfection. God can never be greater or less than he is. I AM includes all that God can be. It sums up all the attributes of perfectness : it is the standard from which there can be no departure and no change.

Many of the heathen philosophers spoke with extraordinary wisdom on this subject. Aristotle says : "God is a Being that is everlasting and most excellent in nature, so that with the Deity life and duration are uninterrupted and eternal, for this constitutes the very essence of God" (Metaphys. l. i. c. 8). Plato teaches : "We say a thing 'was,' 'is,' and 'will be,' while, according to truth, the term 'is' is alone suitable, 'was' and 'will be' being expressions applicable only to generation which proceeds through time ; whereas, whatever exists eternally, the same and immovable, neither becomes at any time older or younger, neither has it been generated in the past, nor will be in the future" (Timæus, c. 10). Plutarch describes, in the city of Sais, in Lower Egypt, "an image of Minerva, whom they believe to be Isis, with this inscription over it : 'I am all that hath been, that is, and that will be, and no mortal has ever been able to unveil me'" (de Isid. et Osirid. c. 9). The same writer argues, in another place : "What is it really *to be*? That only IS which is eternal, uncreated, imperishable, and in which time can effect no change. We must confess that God IS, and that not with reference to time, but as being eternal and immutable, whom nothing can be before or after, past or future, older or younger. Being essentially one, his eternity is included in a present existence,

also
found
I.
XV + XVI.
in the
city of Apollo
at
Ephi.

the *always* in the *now*. And God alone can thus truly be said *to be*, having neither a past nor a future existence, having neither beginning nor end. By this name, then, when worshipping Him, we ought to salute and call upon Him. The Deity is to be addressed by the name *Eī*, Thou art, because in Him there is no variability or change" (de *Eī* apud Delph. c. 19, 20).

In the Septuagint version this sacred name is written, not as in the Hebrew, אהיה אשר איהה. "I AM THAT I AM," but 'Εγώ εἰμι ὁ Ὄν, "I am the On," or, "I am He that is." In the language of the Greek philosophers *On* signified life and being. Plato, after describing the opinions of the Egyptian priests, begins his argument, in the *Timæus* (c. 5), thus:—"We must define, in the first place, what is that *On* which always is, but which had no creation." The fathers of our Church take notice of this, and suppose that Plato derived his learning from Egypt, where he dwelt for three years in On, the same city in which Joseph's father-in-law was priest—(Gen. xli. 45). The word On, in Egyptian; means "The City of the Sun," and is the same as Heliopolis; and the name Potipherah



Name Potipherah in hieroglyphics.

means "belonging to the sun," a very appropriate title for the priest of that city. The Egyptians worshipped the sun as the first cause and creator of all things, under the name of *Rê*, as will be more fully shown in a subsequent chapter—viz. "Darkness to be felt" (chap. xii.) The children of Israel were in bondage in On, and

helped to rebuild the city and to fortify it. There was the great temple of the sun, with its row of splendid obelisks, one of which remains still upon the spot where it was set up nearly 4000 years ago. The Israelites had been constant witnesses of the ceremonies of these sun-worshippers, and had probably taken part in them; and the message of God to them by Moses appears to have had particular reference to this form of idolatry.

Moses was to declare to them "I AM hath sent me unto you." As if he would say, "These people worship the sun, which is only a creature; it was made, and will be destroyed; it has no life, and no existence of its own. Our God is the Creator, the source and centre of life, without beginning and without end, the true Self-existing and Eternal LORD. Whom, therefore, ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you."

The wisdom of the Egyptians might have enabled them to appreciate such a message as this, since they knew what attributes to look for in a god; but Pharaoh would not hearken to Moses. The Israelites were ready to obey him when he spoke to them of the God of their fathers, and to follow him wherever he would lead them: but the pride of Egyptian philosophy could not receive his doctrine. As in later times, these things were hidden from the wise and prudent, and revealed unto babes.

The message which God sends to his Church now is of similar import. Jesus Christ declares his own Self-existence and Eternity,—“Verily, verily, I say unto

you, before Abraham was I AM." When he gave the apostles their commission to go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature, he promised them, "Lo, I AM with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Matt. xxviii. 20). As he delivered Israel by signs and wonders from the power of Pharaoh, so he now works with his ministers, confirms their word with signs following, and delivers his people from the power of Satan. Christ is the living and true God, the WORD of the Father. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but God's WORD shall not pass away. He is the God of our fathers who are dead; He is the God of His Church militant here on earth; and He is the God of the Church triumphant for ever.

And because He lives, we shall live also. He made us at the first; but He made us immortal. We depend upon Him; but He holdeth our soul in life, now and always:—

“ The sun is but a spark of fire,
A transient meteor in the sky;
The soul, immortal as its sire,
Shall never die.’

James Montgomery.

CHAPTER II.

THE ROD CHANGED INTO A SERPENT.

The Rod changed to a Serpent—The Leprous Hand—Meaning of these Signs—"I will be with thy mouth"—Harpocrates, the God of Speech—Circumcision—First Appearance of Moses and Aaron before Pharaoh—The hardening of Pharaoh's Heart an act of Divine Justice.

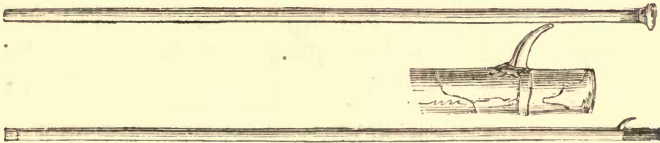
NOTWITHSTANDING the revelation which God had vouchsafed to Moses at the bush, the remembrance of the danger which he had experienced in his former attempt to deliver Israel rendered him fearful of any new effort. God therefore gave him a sign, both for the confirmation of his own faith and for the conviction of others. "The Lord said unto Moses, What is that in thine hand? And he said, A rod. And He said, Cast it on the ground. And he cast it on the ground, and it became a serpent; and Moses fled from before it. And the Lord said unto Moses, Put forth thine hand, and take it by the tail. And he put forth his hand, and caught it, and it became a rod in his hand: That they may believe that the Lord God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath appeared unto thee" (Exod. iv. 2).

The Egyptians were accustomed to carry wands or rods in their hands, as badges of office, or indications of their rank. They were generally of acacia wood, which is even now sold by the monks of Mount Sinai

for the same purpose, or of cherry, and specimens of them are still in existence. The Egyptian priests and



Priests and other persons of rank walking with sticks.



Walking sticks found at Thebes ; 2 is of cherry-wood, in Mr. Salt's Collection.

others are represented in ancient sculptures walking with such rods ; and in the 7th chapter of Exodus the magicians of Egypt are described as having wands in their hands by virtue of their calling. The rod which Moses had in his hand may have been that which he had been accustomed to carry as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. More probably it was a shepherd's staff, such as David took with him when he went to meet the Philistine, and such as he used to smite the lion and the bear which attacked his fold. God called Moses now to be the shepherd of his people, and that

staff which he had carried when following the ewes great with young was henceforth to be the token of his pastoral office among the Israelites, and his help in bringing them forth out of Egypt.

The change from a rod to a serpent, and from a serpent back again into a rod, may have had reference to the serpent-worship which prevailed in Egypt, where the miracle was afterwards repeated in Pharaoh's presence : this will call for notice in its proper place (chap. iii.) For Moses also the miracle would seem to have had a particular significance. The serpent was recognised from the time of our first parents as a type of evil ; but it was also, under some conditions, a memorial or emblem of good. It was the serpent that betrayed the woman, and brought all sin and sorrow into the world ; but it was the serpent, lifted up in the wilderness, that healed all who looked upon it, and became thenceforth a type of Christ. Moses had trusted in his staff forty years before, when he slew the Egyptian, and it had brought him into trouble ; if he had gone before Pharaoh now with no better dependence, it would again have failed him. God showed it to him, therefore, as a serpent, and he was afraid, and fled from it. But God bids him put forth his hand and grasp it ; he obeys, and it becomes again a rod ; and now it is no more a thing to be mistrusted, but a rod of divine virtue, a staff on which he may depend : God has changed the nature of it, and has given it to Moses as an efficient instrument by which Pharaoh is to be rebuked and Israel saved. That Moses regarded it in this light is evident from his mention of it when,

starting at length upon his journey (chap. iv. 20), "Moses took his wife and his sons and set them upon an ass; and he returned to the land of Egypt: and Moses took the rod of God in his hand."

There is a similar lesson for us in this transformation, if we regard it as an emblem of the miraculous change that takes place in our human nature through the grace of God. An old writer says: "The devil is a serpent in hell: the world is a serpent in our hand: the flesh is a serpent in our bosom." We know that in us—that is, in our flesh—dwelleth no good thing, yet we are apt to trust to ourselves as Moses to his staff. "What is that in thine hand?" saith God. "It is mine uprightness, which I hold fast, and will not let it go," is the answer of self-righteousness. "Cast it on the ground," saith the Saviour. We obey him, and this righteousness wherein we trusted takes its proper form, and appears of the nature of sin; it becomes a serpent before us; and instead of relying upon it any longer, we are astonished, and flee from it. But again, God bids us put forth the hand and take it up; and now it turns to righteousness once more, yet not our own, but Christ's—a staff on which we may depend. Looking to the serpent in our hand and in our bosom, we are amazed and horror-stricken; but looking to the serpent lifted up for us, we take courage: from thenceforth we can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth us: in all our trials, his rod and his staff they comfort us. The second sign which God showed Moses may teach a similar lesson. He thrusts his hand into his bosom, and it becomes leprous, white

as snow ; at God's command he puts this unclean, leprous hand again into his bosom, and when he plucks it out, it is clean and whole ; and thereafter, when he stretches forth that hand, the elements obey him ; the river is turned into blood by it ; he casts it out over the Red Sea, and the waters are divided. God has first shown him its natural feebleness, and has then endued it with his own supernatural power.

Moses was still unwilling to enter upon the work to which God had called him. "O Lord," he cries, "I am not eloquent, neither heretofore nor since thou hast spoken unto thy servant : but I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue" (Exod. iv. 10). Moses might reasonably distrust his powers of eloquence. If "heretofore," in Egypt, he had never been "a man of words," the solitary nature of his occupation during forty years in the wilderness would naturally render him still more unskilful in the expression of his thoughts, and especially so in a language which during so long a period he had not heard spoken. "Behold," he says again, "the children of Israel would not hearken unto me ; how then shall Pharaoh hear me, who am of uncircumcised lips ?" (Exod. vi. 12) ; by which expression he would signify his imperfect pronunciation of the Egyptian tongue, and the prejudices he would have to encounter in consequence, as a foreigner and an alien, at the court of Pharaoh.

God answers him, "Who hath made man's mouth, or who maketh the dumb, or deaf, or the seeing, or the blind ? have not I, the LORD ?" This question would probably recall to Moses the pretensions of the

Egyptians, who were very grandiloquent. Plutarch says : "The Egyptians offer gifts to their god Harpocrates, the son of Osiris, saying, 'The tongue is fortune ; The tongue is a deity ;' they consecrate the peach to him especially, because the fruit resembles a heart, and the leaf a tongue ; for of all those things that are in man, there is nothing more divine than the tongue and speech." "As for Harpocrates, we must not imagine him to be an infant God, but the superintendent and regulator of men's language as touching the gods ; for which reason he holdeth a seal - ring before his mouth" (de Isid. et Osirid. c. 68).



Harpocrates.

God promises Moses a better gift than any Egyptian deity could bestow. He will himself be with his mouth, and fill it with words and arguments according to his need. With similar promises our blessed Saviour encouraged his disciples. "When they bring you unto the synagogues, and unto magistrates and powers, take ye no thought how or what thing ye shall answer, or what ye shall say : for the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say" (Luke xii. 11). God also tells Moses that his brother Aaron shall go with him and speak for him : He assures him of Aaron's affection and sympathy, of

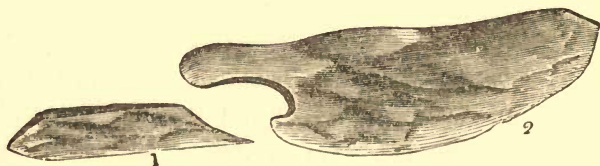
which He only who knoweth what is in men's hearts could be aware,—“Behold he cometh forth to meet thee, and when he seeth thee he will be glad in his heart” (Exod. iv. 14)—a remarkable instance of the divine sympathy with each of the brothers; and at length, Moses being fully convinced that God will work by his hand and by no other, overcomes his diffidence and fear, and yields himself fully and entirely to the Lord, to spend and be spent in his service. From that moment there is no more hesitation or reluctance, no more excusing of himself, but an entire devotion of his life to the work which God has appointed for him. He has counted the cost; he has viewed the matter deliberately in all its bearings; and when he at length undertakes the task, it is with a complete abandonment of himself, and a firm and steadfast resolution to fulfil his duty. God's work calls especially for thoughtfulness and consideration: that which is lightly begun may be lightly laid aside; better to hesitate and shrink back from the responsibilities of God's service, like the Son who refused at first, but afterwards repented and went, than to be over-confident or careless. “No man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God” (Luke ix. 62).

Moses having obtained the consent of Jethro, now goes down to Egypt, being yet further assured by the word of God—“All the men are dead that sought thy life.” So confident is he now of a speedy and successful issue, that he is not afraid to take with him two companions very unfit for such an adventure—his wife

Zipporah and her infant son. This gives occasion to a remarkable episode. In the inn, or more properly the tent—for there were no caravansaries in those days—in which Moses, with his wife and child, is resting, God comes to them, no longer with the gracious aspect which he had manifested hitherto, but with threatening and wrath. “The Lord met him, and sought to kill him.” The manner of this visitation is not told. An angel may have been sent to him, like the angel which withstood Balaam, having a sword in his hand to smite him; or he may have been attacked with mortal sickness, God giving him to understand, as He did Hezekiah, that he should die, and not live. Whatever it may have been, Moses understood the reason of it. He had married a Midianite, and being unequally yoked with an unbeliever, had neglected to perform that rite of circumcision on his son which the law of God demanded. In the 17th chapter of Genesis it is written, “The uncircumcised man child shall be cut off from his people.” Moses was now on his way to the children of Israel to be their guide and teacher. He was to declare the law of God among them, and to see that they obeyed it. “Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God? Thou that teachest others, teachest thou not thyself?” (Rom. ii. 23). Moses was to be an overseer or bishop among the Jews, and “a bishop must be blameless, one that ruleth well his own house: for if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?” (1 Tim. iii. 2). He must there-

fore remove the cause of offence in his child, or himself suffer the penalty of disobedience.

The Egyptians, according to Herodotus, Strabo, and other writers, practised circumcision. "This custom," says the former, "can be traced both in Egypt and Ethiopia to the remotest antiquity" (l. ii. c. 104). At what age it was performed by the Egyptians is uncertain; but it is worthy of remark that the Arabians circumcised their children when they were thirteen years old, because the founder of their nation, Ishmael, was circumcised at that age (Gen. xvii. 23). The Midianites, though descended also from Abraham by Keturah, omitted it, and this explains the reluctance of Zipporah to perform the rite upon her son. To save her husband's life, however, she consented to it, and herself performed the operation, using for the purpose a sharp stone, or knife of flint, which, as Herodotus tells us, was preferred to steel for purposes connected with religion, and especially for making cuttings or incisions in the human person (Herod. ii. 86). Specimens of these knives, both broad and narrow, have been found in the tombs at



Stone knives.

Thebes, where they were used in the preparation and embalming of mummies, and may be seen in collections of Egyptian antiquities.

Zipporah and her children were now sent back to Jethro, and we hear no more of them until after the Exodus, when Jethro brought them to Moses in the wilderness (Exod. xviii. 2). But Moses is not left alone: God sends Aaron to him, according to His promise, to comfort him and help him. The Lord had been wroth with Moses; but, saith the Psalmist, "His anger endureth but for a moment" (Ps. xxx. 5); "His mercy endureth for ever" (Ps. cxxxvi.) No sooner is the offence removed than God's favour is restored. The Lord said unto Aaron, "Go into the wilderness to meet Moses; and he went and met him in the Mount of God, and kissed him" (Exod. iv. 27). These were true brothers, "born for adversity;" their first greeting was a kiss; their first speech was of God; their first work was an act of obedience to their Lord's commands. "Moses told Aaron all the words of the LORD, and they went and gathered together the children of Israel; and Aaron spake all the words which the LORD had spoken, and did the signs in the sight of all the people; and the people believed, and bowed their heads and worshipped" (Exod. iv. 28).

Without delay, Moses and Aaron now present themselves before Pharaoh, and declare their errand. "Thus saith the LORD, Let my people go, that they may hold a feast unto me in the wilderness;" and Pharaoh answers with contempt, "Who is the LORD, that I should obey His voice? I know not the LORD, neither will I let Israel go" (Exod. v. 1, 2).

The history of Moses and Aaron appearing thus

together at the Court of Pharaoh, the one working miracles and the other as his spokesman, may have given rise to the traditions of the Greeks and Romans, in which Jupiter and Mercury, both of them Egyptian deities worshipped as Hammon and Thoth, are described visiting the earth in a similar relationship.



Thoth, the Egyptian Hermes.

The latter was represented with the caduceus, a rod twisted about with serpents, and was the god of speech or eloquence. To such traditions the saying of the people of Lystra may be referred, when Paul had healed the cripple: "The gods are come down to us in the likeness of men: and they called Barnabas Jupiter, and Paul Mercurius, because he was the chief speaker" (Acts xiv. 11).

The reception which Moses and Aaron met with from Pharaoh was of a different kind from this; but it was such as they might have anticipated: for God, while he assured Moses that the Israelites would hearken to his voice, forewarned him also, "I am sure that the king of Egypt will not let you go; no, not by a mighty hand. From the days of Joseph the sojourning of the Israelites had contributed in no slight degree to the wealth and prosperity of Egypt.

Under a mild and generous government they had shown themselves industrious and peaceful ; but they were now estranged from their rulers, and Pharaoh had good reason to believe that they would gladly break away from him. It was for this reason that he had destroyed their male children, "Lest they multiply and fight against us, and so get them up out of the land." Immediately before Moses started on his journey from Horeb, God had repeated this warning, and in a manner explained it, "I will harden Pharaoh's heart, that he shall not let the people go." This sentence occurs so often in the subsequent history of God's dealings with Pharaoh, and has been the subject of so much controversy, that it is well we should inquire briefly into its meaning before proceeding further.

God is here represented sending messages to Pharaoh, and at the same time exercising such power over his heart as to cause him to reject those messages. The Most High punishes the king and people with a series of unheard-of plagues, and finally with complete destruction, because they will not obey His commands ; and yet darkens their minds and hardens their hearts, so that they can neither understand His purpose nor yield to His will.

In explanation of this it has been suggested that the sentence "I will harden Pharaoh's heart" means only, "I will leave him to his natural obstinacy ; I will suffer him to harden himself ;" like the doom of Ephraim: "Ephraim is joined to idols ; let him alone" (Hos. iv. 17). But this is rather an evasion of the

x Note:— It is clear from the full historical account in Exodus cap. III to XII inclusive, that Pharaoh's will, natural disposition of being pride, obstinacy, & huckstering spirit as to the quantities who should go out, & the cattle, as well as the

difficulty than a solution; the words are too plain and too important to be disposed of thus. The LORD Himself says to Moses, distinctly and emphatically, "I will harden," or, "I have hardened;" and the words are equivalent to "I, even I," "I for my part," or, "as for me, I have hardened." Moreover, in the 9th chapter Moses is instructed to tell Pharaoh: "In very deed for this cause have I raised thee up (or made thee to stand), for to shew in thee my power; and that my name may be declared throughout all the earth." It must be admitted, therefore, that it was God himself who hardened Pharaoh's heart, and that He did it by a direct act of His own, and for a wise and righteous purpose.

Yet God cannot be either directly or indirectly the author of sin; He doth not tempt any man. It is not to be believed for a moment that He created Pharaoh for no other purpose than to destroy him, or that He predestined him to do evil, in order that his punishment might be conspicuous and his example profitable as a warning to others. Nor is there anything in the history before us to point to such a conclusion. Pharaoh was a cruel and idolatrous heathen; his people were sunk in the grossest superstition and vice: God designed to punish both for their excesses, which even the law of nature and of conscience must have condemned; and at the same time to lead forth His own people, and deliver them from their misery and degradation. He might have accomplished these objects as well by one sign as by ten. He might have destroyed Egypt in

children they should leave behind (see Cap. 15. Verse 8. & 11. & same Cap. Verse 3.) and the loss of the material loss to Egypt. It is clear, I say, that the Omnipotent did not cause, suppose, or force the will of the King before, or during the infliction of these plagues, but on the contrary allowed entirely free play to natural forces both in him & his surroundings and so diminished not his personal responsibility for the consequences of his conduct. His hardening of heart therefore consisted of the declared natural

results of such judicial treatment upon such a character previously existing in the man; & foreseen by the Omnipotent as not capable of being curbed until the complete death of the firstborn & only finally to be subdued by the waters of the Red Sea. Had this King behaved like the King of Amurrah in the Book of Joshua, doubtless all my would have followed.

a moment, and set Israel free with a stroke; but He chose rather to make the process gradual, and to give respite and punishment alternately, that He might show the necessary consequences of disobedience, and hand down a lesson and a warning to all future generations. Thus the overthrow of one nation might be made the salvation of another, and the punishment of Egypt the instruction of the world.

Instead, therefore, of executing upon Pharaoh and his people the immediate vengeance which they had deserved, God visited them with a judicial blindness. The obstinacy which He imposed upon them was itself a part of their punishment. We have no reason to suppose that Pharaoh might not, at one period of his life, have controlled his temper and his conduct; or that there was anything, either in his natural character or in the circumstances of his position, which rendered him, of necessity, more vicious than others. He sinned at first willingly, and God bore with him patiently; but his day of grace was now past. As in the history of Nebuchadnezzar, whose heart was taken away, and a beast's heart given him instead, as a punishment for wickedness and pride, so Pharaoh's heart was now rendered insensible—"made heavy," for such is the literal interpretation of the word, like the heart of one of his own brute deities. The sentence which he had deserved long ago was at length executed upon him, "Make his heart fat and his ears heavy, and shut his eyes" (Isa. vi. 10); "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still" (Rev.

D

at, therefore, as a condition precedent & coercive; but as a declared consequent penal infliction.
Refer. under the word "Harden" in Concordance. & Matt. c. 13. Ver. 10-16

xxii. 11): and now God would make use of him as a warning to others: He would raise him up, or "continue" him upon the throne of Egypt, that he might become a proverb and an example to all generations: He would make use of him for His own ends, and get to Himself honour from him in his death, by judging him *openly* for all the rebellion and dishonour of his life.

Nor are we to conclude that the punishment of Pharaoh was of any other than a temporal kind. A special judgment was appointed as the consequence of each new act of disobedience; and the last offence of all was followed by his death in the Red Sea. There his history ends. God judges men according to their opportunities; their punishments are proportioned to their knowledge and privileges. Pharaoh said truly that he "knew not the Lord." "That servant who knew not his Lord's will, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes" (Luke xii. 47); how few, God, in His mercy, will show us hereafter. The sins of Pharaoh were his own, and his punishment, so far as we are informed of it, was certainly no greater than they deserved. We are never told that his condemnation was increased on account of that judicial hardness which was itself a part of it. The ruin which advanced upon him with successive strokes, and which finally destroyed him, was nothing more than he had merited a thousand times over before God hardened him and judged him.

The same may be said of the Egyptians as a nation. The sufferings they incurred had been justly

merited by their own wickedness. God was not wroth with all the congregation because of one man's sin. Far from Him the purpose of destroying the wicked with the just. All Egypt was sunk in the grossest immorality ; and all Egypt suffered for the sins of their own flesh. If, at the time of the Passover, "there was not an house where there was not one dead," it was because there was not an house which was not full of wickedness. God was not extreme to mark iniquity when He judged Egypt ; He did but suspend the appointed vengeance, enduring for a time the vessels of wrath fitted for destruction, that the blow, when it fell, might be recognised as coming from His hand, and as the due reward of their misdeeds.

Blindness of understanding and obstinacy of spirit appear to have been confessed, even by the heathen, and by the Egyptians among the number, as a consequence of the divine displeasure. "Quem Deus vult perdere prius dementat" was a common proverb. Homer makes Hector say to Achilles—

"The furies thy relentless breast have steel'd,
And cursed thee with a heart that cannot yield."

Iliad, l. 22, v. 356.

Theognis has the following :—

"The gods send insolence to lead astray
The man whom Fortune and the Fates betray,
Predestined to precipitate decay."

v. 151.

Plutarch observes :—"The deity makes use of some wicked persons as executioners to punish others,

and thus he generally deals, as I think, with most tyrants.”—*De Sera num. vind. c. 7.*

Christians must admit the same solemn truth. There is a period when God's mercy ceases to strive with sinners, when they are abandoned to their own evil ways, or upheld only as examples to others. Such was the condition of the Jews over whom our Saviour lamented in those touching words: “If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! But now they are hid from thine eyes!” (Luke xix. 42). Such were they for whom St. John gave no encouragement to pray, because they had sinned unto death (1 John v. 16); such were they also of whom St. Paul declares that it was impossible to renew them again to repentance (Heb. vi. 6; and x. 27), and that nothing remained for them but a certain fearful looking for of judgment to come, and of that fiery indignation which shall consume the wicked: and such, it may be presumed, were Pharaoh and his people.

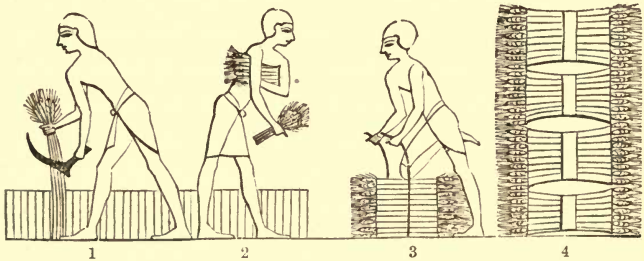
CHAPTER III.

SEASONS OF THE PLAGUES. THE MAGICIANS OF EGYPT.

Brick-making in Egypt—Description by Diodorus of forced Labour—Punishment with the Stick—Use of Stubble—"A stretched-out Arm," Meaning of this Symbol in Hieroglyphics—Seasons and Duration of the several Plagues—Calendar of Events—Serpent-worship—Magicians of Egypt.

"WHO is the Lord? I know not the Lord" (Exod. v. 2)—such was Pharaoh's answer to Moses and Aaron upon their first appeal to him. It is quite possible that he was sincere in this, and had never heard of Jehovah; this was in one sense a new name even to the Jews; for God had said to Moses, I appeared unto Abraham, and unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty—"El Shaddai;" but by my name Jehovah was I not known unto them. If Pharaoh had heard of Him, he did not recognise Him as a god, for he had never seen Him, nor any image of Him, such as were constantly before his eyes in the numerous personifications of his own nature-worship. He does not deny, however, the existence of such a Deity; there may be such a God for anything he knows or cares. The gods of the Egyptians might be counted by hundreds; one more or less could be of little consequence to Pharaoh; but that the king of Egypt should be required, in a practical manner, to

submit himself to any god whatever, or that the God of the Israelites should be supposed to rank above himself, was not to be endured. The immediate consequence of Moses' interposition, therefore, was to provoke Pharaoh to greater cruelties. The Israelites were employed chiefly in making bricks, which, being formed of mud from the Nile, and not of clay, required layers of straw, or some other similar material, to give them consistency. By the king's command, straw was no longer provided for the brickmakers, who were therefore scattered over the country to collect it for themselves. The method of reaping in Egypt was to cut off the corn close to the ear, leaving nearly the whole of the straw standing. This was afterwards



Wheat bound in sheaves.

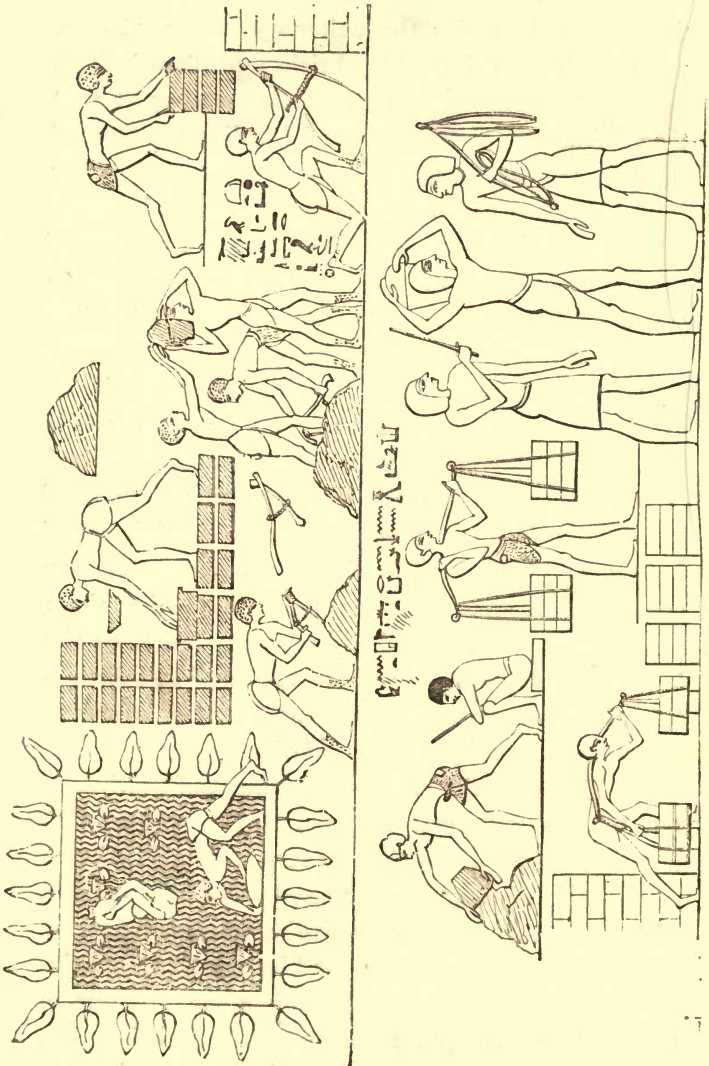
Fig. 1. Reaping. 2. Carrying the ears. 3. Binding them in sheaves put up at fig. 4.

plucked up by the roots, and chopped to pieces for fodder or for the brickmakers. The Israelites were now called upon to perform the most laborious part of the harvest work, in addition to their other burdens. They must go into the fields, under the burning summer sun, and cut and bind up the straw, or stubble as it is called, and carry it home and cut it up for use.

There is extant a papyrus, of about the same date as the Exodus, in which the writer complains, "I have no one to help me in making bricks ; no straw." This appears to have been a proverbial saying at that time. Among the fragments of Lucilius, the Roman satirist, a similar expression is found : " He who makes bricks has nothing more than common clay, with chaff, or stubble, mixed with mud." There is a proverb of our own, evidently of Eastern origin, applicable to the case of the oppressed Israelites : " It is the last straw that breaks the camel's back."

Bricks of Nile mud are still made in Egypt. They are dried in the sun, and would crumble to pieces if it were not for the filaments of straw or reeds worked up with them. There is a painting on the tomb of Bekshara, at Thebes, which represents the labours of bondsmen in the brick-fields. The taskmasters are shown overlooking the workmen, threatening them with rods and heavy lashes, and urging them, as the legend states, to "work without fainting." A distinction of colour makes it apparent that the labourers are captives, most probably Asiatics.

Diodorus speaks of the employment of captives in all the most laborious works of Egypt. "Sesoosis," he says, "built a temple in every city of Egypt to that god which each place adored ; and he employed none of the Egyptians in his works, but finished all by the labours of the captives ; and he caused an inscription to be made upon every temple thus : 'None of the natives were put to labour here'" (l. i. c. 56). Describing the great pyramids built by Chemonis and



Foreign captives employed in making bricks at Thebes.

his brother Cephres, the same writer refers to the extreme severity of the labour in the following terms : “Although the kings designed these two for their sepulchres, yet it happened that neither of them were there buried ; for the people were so incensed by the



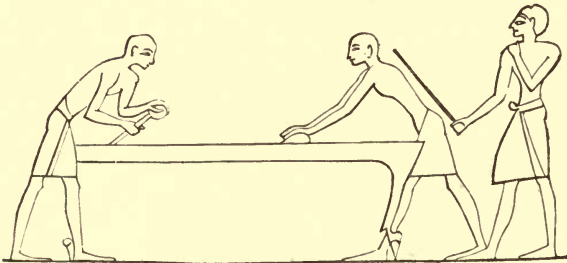
The Bastinado.

toil and labour they were put to, and the cruelty and oppression which they suffered, that they rose against the kings, and threatened to drag their carcasses out of their monuments, and to tear them piecemeal and cast them to dogs ; therefore both of them upon their beds commanded their servants to bury them in some obscure place ”(l. i. c. 64). The punishment of the bas-

tinado was common in Egypt, and workmen, whether engaged in the field or in handicrafts, were liable to be beaten with sticks to stimulate them to greater industry.



Women Bastinadoed.



Workmen beaten.

It is probable that an interval of at least two or three months was suffered to elapse between the first visit of Moses, which resulted in this increased severity, and the infliction of the first plague. During that time the collecting of the stubble must have been partly suspended, on account of the inundations, and Moses would be engaged in preparing his people for their promised emancipation. They seem to have lost heart at the delay ; and on the occasion of a subsequent visit of Moses and Aaron to Pharaoh, they

"stood in the way," to meet them as they came forth, and reproached them for the increase of their burdens, which had been hitherto the only result of their interference, "The Lord look upon you and judge, because ye have made our savour to be abhorred in the eyes of Pharaoh, and in the eyes of his servants, to put a sword in their hand to slay us. And Moses returned unto the LORD, and said, Lord, wherefore hast thou so evil entreated this people? why is it that thou hast sent me? For since I came to Pharaoh to speak in thy name, he hath done evil to this people; neither hast thou delivered thy people at all" (Exod. v. 22).

God now gives Moses and Aaron a fresh assurance of his own immediate support. Let God arise, and let his enemies be scattered! Moses had done what he could, and had made matters worse. "Now," saith Jehovah, "shalt thou see what I will do unto Pharaoh, for with a strong hand shall he let them go, and with a strong hand shall he drive them out of this land." "I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will rid you out of their bondage, and I will redeem you with a stretched-out arm, and with great judgments" (Exod. vi. 6).

The significance of this figure, "a stretched-out arm," must have been well understood by the Israelites. The deities of the Egyptians were represented with outstretched arms, as symbols of irresistible might. In the hieroglyphics which may yet be seen upon the obelisk at Heliopolis, and with which the children of Israel must have been familiar, two outstretched arms occur as part of the title of one of the

kings, Osirtasen Racheperka, with this meaning, "Osirtasen, the sun, is might!" God's outstretched arm, therefore, is opposed to the king's; and he adds, "I will take you to me for a people, and I will be to you a God; and ye shall know that I am the LORD your God, which bringeth you out from under the burden of the Egyptians." Moses must also have bethought him of the promise made to him upon the mountains: "See, I have made thee a god to Pharaoh:" his outstretched arm was now endued with "might;" it was the instrument by which many of the plagues were brought upon the land, and by which at last Pharaoh and his host were overwhelmed.

It is a question of no little interest, at what time of the year the several visitations occurred, since the miraculous character of each would be more or less conspicuous to the Egyptians, according as the temperature of the season, or other natural causes, might be favourable or otherwise to the effects produced. To ascertain these dates with precision is indeed impossible; nor can we tell what was the duration of each of the plagues, nor what space of time was allowed by God's mercy to elapse between the removal of one judgment and the infliction of another. There are, however, certain incidental points in the history which may help us to form an opinion on this part of the subject, which will probably be not very far from the truth.

The call of Moses took place, as it has been shown, in the spring or early summer; for it was at that season that the shepherds led their flocks from the

plains to the mountains. His first visit to Pharaoh was after harvest, and before the annual overflow of the Nile had begun, otherwise the Israelites could not have been sent into the fields to gather straw or stubble. The murrain occurred when the cattle were "in the field," which is the case in Egypt from December to April; at other times they are kept in their stalls. The time of the plague of rain, hail, and fire, can be ascertained with more exactness: "The flax and the barley was smitten, for the barley was in the ear and the flax was balled; but the wheat and the rye were not smitten, for they were not grown up" (Exod. ix. 31). Barley ripens in Egypt in the month of March, and wheat in April; the former would therefore be green in the ear towards the end of February or the beginning of March, and at that time it was destroyed. The date of the final catastrophe is known—the 10th day of the month Abib or Nisan, which corresponds nearly to April.

With regard to the duration of each plague, we know only that the first lasted seven days, while the last but one—the darkness—continued only three. The whole of the plagues may be divided into three groups or series. The first two of each group were foretold, but the third came without previous warning. It is probable that, as each series of plagues exceeded in severity those which had gone before, their duration was at the same time diminished. We may suppose, also, that they followed each other in quicker succession as the catastrophe approached; or, in other words, that the interval of grace was shorter in the later visit-

ations than in the earlier; but sufficient time must have elapsed in every instance for Pharaoh to reflect upon his doings, to recover from his alarm, to harden his heart after it had been subdued, to reconsider the vows which he had made, and to resolve, perhaps under the promptings of his wife (see chap. xvi.), on breaking them; and that could not well have been less than seven days.

Supposing that each of the three latest plagues lasted three days, as *one* of them certainly did, with intervals of seven days, that would occupy the time which is known to have elapsed between the seventh plague and the tenth—namely, thirty days, or thereabouts. So far, therefore, we must be tolerably correct. Reckoning backwards now, and allowing five days for the continuance of each of the second series, and seven days for each of the first, which is correct in one instance at least, and presuming intervals of fourteen and twenty-one days respectively, instead of seven, we arrive at the dates proposed in the following calendar of events:—

	Call of Moses	In the spring.	
	1st appearance before Pharaoh	May.	
First Series.	{ 1st Plague. The river smitten after its subsidence	Middle of October.	
		2d, Frogs	Middle of November.
		3d, Lice	Middle of December.
Second Series.	{ 4th, Flies	January.	
		5th, The Murrain	End of January.
		6th, Boils and blains	February.
Third Series.	{ 7th, Hail	Beginning of March.	
		8th, Locusts	Middle of March.*
		9th, Darkness	End of March.
	{ 10th, Death of the first-born	Beginning of April.	

It will be shown in the following chapters that the above dates are entirely consistent with the scriptural account of the events to which they are respectively assigned.

The repeated assurance of God's immediate and powerful help by his own interposition, and by the outstretched arm of Moses, appears to have had but little effect upon the afflicted Israelites. "They hearkened not unto Moses for anguish of spirit and for cruel bondage." But there is a message for Pharaoh also. Moses and Aaron are to go again unto the king, and this time they are not only to use words, but to exhibit signs. Pharaoh seeks to prove them, and demands a miracle; and Aaron, who had been prepared for this, casts the rod upon the ground, as God had charged him, and now again, as upon Mount Horeb, it is changed into a serpent. "Then Pharaoh also called the wise men and the sorcerers: now the magicians of Egypt, they also did in like manner with their enchantments, for they cast down every man his rod, and they became serpents: but Aaron's rod swallowed up their rods" (Exod. vii. 11).

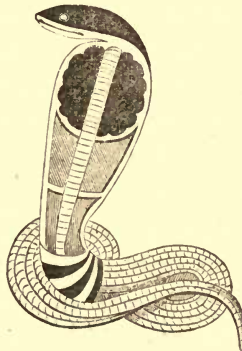
Among the Egyptians, and also the Phœnicians, the serpent was an emblem of divine wisdom and power, and as such it was revered. Eusebius speaks of two serpents which were kept alive at Thebes, in Upper Egypt, "to which the people appointed a celebration of sacrifices, also festivals and orgies, esteeming them the greatest of all the gods and sovereigns of the universe." The asp was sacred to Neph, and is often represented upon the

head of that deity : in hieroglyphics it signified a *goddess*. The asp is represented in the tombs of Thebes guarding the winepresses and granaries of the Egyp-



Asp-goddess of the lower country.

tians, who looked upon it as a kind of agathodæmon, or good genius. Mr. Lane mentions, as a curious relic of ancient Egyptian superstition, that it is believed in



Agathodæmon.

Cairo that each quarter of the city has a peculiar guardian genius or agathodæmon, which has the form of a serpent (Modern Egyptians). Herodotus speaks

of a species of snake, in the neighbourhood of Thebes, with two horns upon its head. "When they die, they are buried in the temple of Jupiter, to whom they are said to belong" (Herod. ii. 74).

There were other serpents in Egypt which were not so highly esteemed, and one was regarded as a type of the Evil Being, and was said to have been slain by Horus, who is often represented in the sculptures standing in a boat and piercing the serpent's head with a spear as it rises out of the water. Serpent-worship spread from Egypt to other countries. There was a mystic serpent at Eleusis, and another in the Acropolis at Athens, which, according to Herodotus, was looked upon as the guardian of the place. The transformation of Aaron's rod into a serpent, and the swallowing up of all the other serpents by it, was therefore calculated to impress the Egyptians with the greatness and supremacy of the God of Israel.



Aphophis destroying a Serpent.

There is frequent mention in the Bible of the magicians of Egypt. In this history, and also in that of Joseph, they are spoken of as a class practising their arts under sanction of the government, though there was an unlawful kind of magic carried on at the same time less openly. When the Pharaoh of Joseph's history was troubled by his dreams, he sent for his

wise men to interpret them, for which Joseph reproved him—"Do not interpretations belong to God?" The magicians of Egypt were now called upon to try their arts against Moses, and not without some measure of success. They succeeded in changing their rods into serpents, but were put to confusion by seeing them swallowed up by Aaron's rod. They also imitated the first two plagues. They turned water into blood, and brought forth frogs; but they could not produce lice by any of their arts, whether pretended or real; and they then ceased from their attempts, and confessed "This is the finger of God" (Exod. viii. 19). St. Paul gives the names of two of the magicians, and mentions their defeat. Speaking of the blasphemers who should appear in the perilous times of the latter days, he says: "Now, as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith; but they shall proceed no further; for their folly shall be manifest to all men, as theirs also was" (2 Tim. iii. 8).

The historian Pliny speaks of the magicians of Egypt, and numbers Moses among them. "There is a sect of adepts in the magic art who derive their origin from Moses, Jamres, and Lotopea, Jews by birth, but many thousand years posterior to Zoroastre" (Hist. Nat. l. 30, c. 2). In one of Lucian's stories he introduces "a man of Memphis, a person of amazing wisdom, and a real adept in all the learning of the Egyptians. It was reputed that he had lived no less than three-and-twenty years in a cave underground, and during that time was instructed by Isis herself in

magic" (Philopseudes, c. 34). It is possible that the following, also from Pliny, may have its origin in some confused tradition of the rod of Aaron, its transformation into a serpent, and its use subsequently in dividing the waters of the Red Sea :—"We are told that by the agency of the tail of the chameleon the course of rivers and torrents may be stopped. The tail, prepared with cedar and myrrh, and tied to a double branch of the date palm, will divide waters that are smitten therewith, and so disclose everything that lies at the bottom" (Hist. Nat. l. 28, c. 29).

It has been questioned whether the sorcerers of Egypt really performed the wonders ascribed to them, or whether they only "did so by their arts," deceiving the spectators by feats of legerdemain. Some writers assert that the priests of Egypt kept an asp coiled up in the hats which they wore in their religious ceremonies: it was tamed, and taught to move about in answer to the sound made by snapping the fingers, and might therefore have been brought forth by signal to assist the magicians in their imitation of the miracle of Moses. There were jugglers, or serpent-charmers, in those days, as there are now; and it is a common trick with them to produce living serpents from the cornices or other parts of the rooms, which by handling they cause to become stiff and lifeless, restoring them again to animation at their pleasure. Pococke mentions a miraculous serpent which he saw in a grotto near Raigny on the Nile, in the year 1737, which was said to be immortal, and to have the power of healing all manner of diseases. "The priests," he says, "have

taught their charge the part he is to act, or perhaps have charms to lull him into submission, and when he dies it is an easy matter to substitute another in his room. The priests, who are probably excellent jugglers, can perform all that is ascribed to the serpent without working any miracle." The Koran, describing the scene at Pharaoh's court, says that the magicians provided themselves with a number of thick ropes and pieces of wood, which they contrived by some means to move about, and make them writhe and twist one over another, so that they appeared to the spectators to be living serpents.

But there is no occasion to depart from the plain statement of Moses in this place: "They cast down every man his rod, and they became serpents." We do not know to what extent the power of Satan may have prevailed in those days and in that country. In Egypt God was unknown, and the people were devoted to destruction for their sins. Where God is not, there Satan may set up his kingdom, for he is the god of this world. Witchcraft and sorcery were possible crimes, and prevailed among the Gentiles, or God would not have warned his own people so solemnly against them. That there were in Egypt prophets and dreamers, who gave signs and wonders which did actually come to pass, may be inferred from Deuteronomy (chap. xiii.); and St. Paul speaks of such things as still possible, and even foretells them in those last days when "the working of Satan shall be with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish" (2 Thess.

ii. 10). The magicians probably looked upon Moses as an adept⁴ in the black art greater and more skilful than themselves. They were put to confusion by his wonders, and confessed his superiority. "But Pharaoh's heart was hardened, that he hearkened not unto them, as the Lord had said."

CHAPTER IV.

THE WATERS TURNED TO BLOOD.

The First Plague—The River of Egypt : its appearance in Moses' days : its Productions : its Annual Overflow : the Birthplace of the Gods : honoured as a Deity : its Fish and Reptiles sacred : excellence of its Water for drinking : turned into Blood—Meaning of the Sign—Destruction of the Male Children of the Israelites—Divine retribution—Moses drawn out of the Nile to be “a God” to Pharaoh.

IT may fairly be presumed that if Egypt had paid due attention to the first sign displayed by Moses and Aaron, which was not of the nature of a plague, but an exhibition of power only, by way of credential for their mission, not one of the punishments which followed would have been inflicted. But now these servants of Jehovah are sent a third time to the king, and with a much more serious communication.

“The LORD said unto Moses, Pharaoh's heart is hardened, he refuseth to let the people go. Get thee unto Pharaoh in the morning : lo, he goeth out unto the water ; and thou shalt stand by the river's brink against he come ; and the rod which was turned to a serpent shalt thou take in thine hand. And thou shalt say unto him, The LORD God of the Hebrews hath sent me unto thee, saying, Let my people go, that they may serve me in the wilderness : and behold, hitherto thou wouldest not hear. Thus saith the LORD, In this shalt thou know that I am the

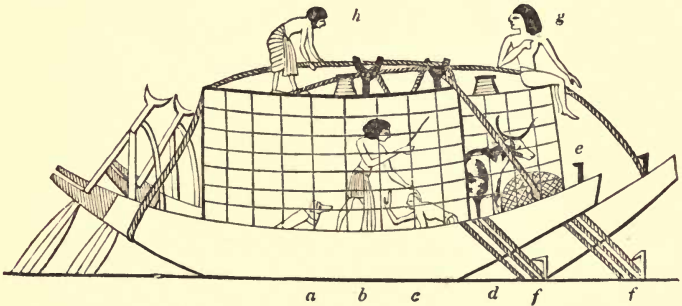
LORD: behold, I will smite with the rod that is in mine hand upon the waters which are in the river, and they shall be turned to blood. And the fish that is in the river shall die, and the river shall stink; and the Egyptians shall loathe to drink of the water of the river" (Exod. vii. 14).

The principal subject of the first great judgment was the river Nile. "The River," as it was emphatically called, or "the River of Egypt," for the name Nile is not to be found in Holy Scripture, was the chief source of wealth and prosperity to the Egyptians, by whom it was regarded with superstitious reverence as the birthplace of the gods. Let us endeavour to form some idea of the appearance it presented in the days of the Pharaohs. The source of the Nile was, even at that early period, the subject of much speculation and adventure, and it is only within the last few years that this has been ascertained. It takes its rise from a great lake or basin in Central Africa, and traverses a rich and beautiful country on its way northward to the sea. It is the longest river in the world. In some parts of its course it flows gently and peacefully, fertilising the land upon its banks; at others it rushes with great swiftness between lofty and precipitous rocks, broken here and there by mighty cataracts, or by a series of rapids extending over many miles. The description in the book of Job is very appropriate to some parts of this river—"He cutteth out rivers among the rocks; and his eye seeth every precious thing; he bindeth the floods from overflowing" (Job xxviii. 10).

In lower Egypt the Nile flowed through a rich plain, bounded by the desert and extending to the sea. On either side, as far as the eye could reach, luxurious crops of corn or barley grew, and ripened in the sun. Groves of sycomore and palm trees cast their grateful shade over the banks and paths; high rocks or hillocks rising from the plain were crowned with ancient cities, villages, or temples, of which a few crumbling ruins now alone remain, or whose memorial is altogether perished. Broad dykes, with roads running along upon them, served to connect these towns or hamlets at all seasons, even when the fields were overflowed. The less frequented parts of the river were lined with reeds and flags, and the far-famed papyrus, while the richly-scented and variegated flowers of the sacred lotus floated upon the surface. The waters abounded in fish, some of which were regarded with superstitious reverence, while others were in estimation only as articles of food. "We remember the fish which we did eat in Egypt freely" (Num. xi. 5), said the Israelites in the desert. There are but few fish in the river now, and the lotus and papyrus are scarce. The prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled: "The reeds and flags shall wither; the paper reeds by the brooks, and every thing sown by the brooks, shall wither, be driven away, and be no more: the fishers also shall mourn, and all they that cast angle into the brooks shall lament: and they that spread nets upon the waters shall languish" (Is. xix. 6).

In the time of the Pharaohs the River of Egypt presented a gay and animated scene. Boats, formed

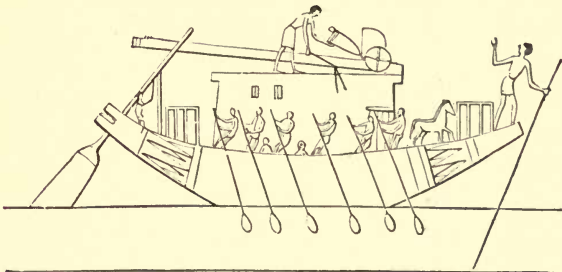
for the most part of reeds, "arks of bulrushes," were continually passing over its waters, some of them carrying anglers, or groups of sportsmen armed with the bow and arrow, or the throwstick, in pursuit of



Boats for carrying cattle and goods on the Nile.

a b, two boats, fastened to the bank by the ropes and pegs *f f*; in the cabin of one a man inflicts the bastinado on a boatman. He is one of the stewards of the estate, and is accompanied by his dog. In the other boat is a cow, and a net of hay or chopped straw (*e*), precisely the same as the *shensfeh* now used in Egypt.

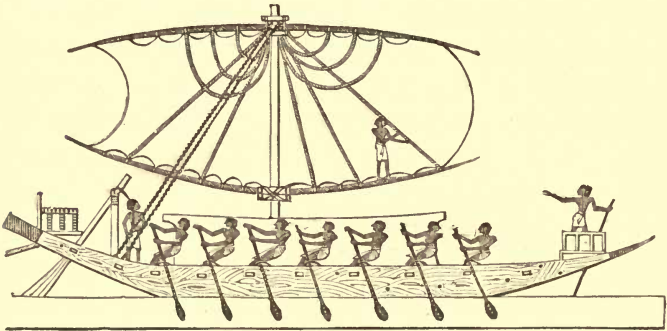
wild fowl; others laden with merchandise. These were propelled by oars, or when the wind was favourable, by a large sail raised upon a short mast, and



A boat with the mast and sail taken down, having a chariot and horses on board.

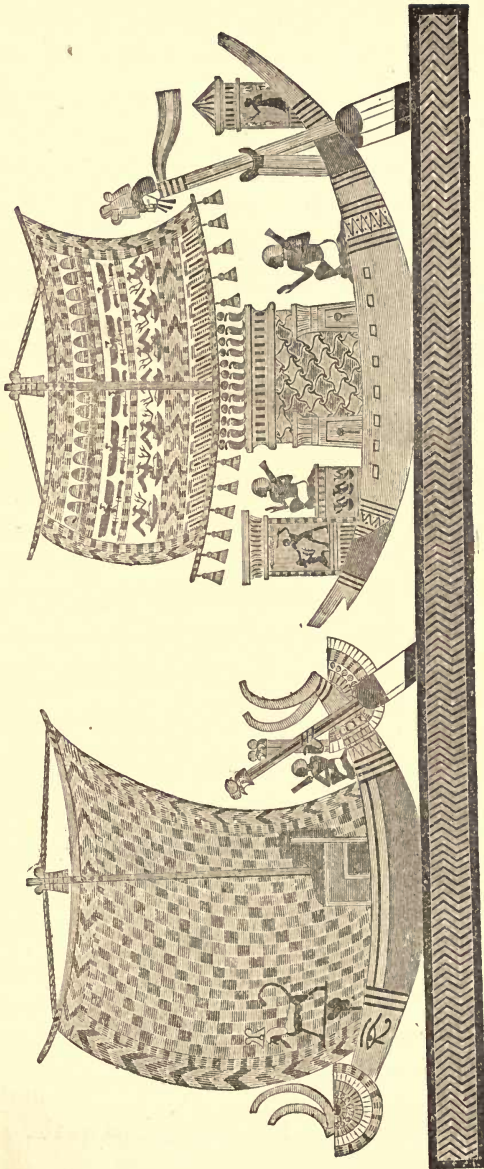
stretched between two yards. Vessels of more elegant construction were also frequent, having sails

painted with rich colours, or embroidered with fanciful devices, some representing flowers, and others sacred emblems. These were occupied by pleasure-seekers, or perhaps by the votaries of the Nile god, engaged in some religious ceremonial.



Boat of the Nile; showing how the sail was fastened to the yards, and the nature of the rigging.

On the banks of the river stood many a painted temple, many an airy pavilion, many a pleasant summer house. Here a group of women in picturesque costume came to draw water; there a herd of oxen or buffaloes were driven down to drink. Upon the rich pastures on either side cattle were seen grazing, as Pharaoh beheld them in his dream—“ Well-favoured and fat-fleshed, which fed in a meadow, or in the marsh grass ” (Gen. xli. 18). As those visionary kine came up out of the river, so did all the fatness of the land depend upon the extent or failure of the annual overflow of the Nile. About the middle of August the river, after a gradual rise of many weeks, poured forth through the channels and



Boats with coloured and embroidered sails.

openings prepared for it, and covered the lowlands with broad sheets of water, depositing upon them the rich alluvial soil brought down in its course from Upper Egypt. According to Pliny, "should the Nile not have exceeded twelve cubits in its overflow, famine was the sure result, while a rise of sixteen cubits ensured a plentiful harvest" (Hist. Nat. l. 18, c. 47). "The Egyptians have no occasion for the process or instruments of agriculture" says Herodotus (l. 3, c. 14). "As soon as the river has spread itself over their lands, and returned to its bed, each man scatters the seed over his ground, and waits patiently for the harvest."

It is not surprising that a river which was the source of such incalculable benefits to the Egyptians, should become an object of their religious veneration. It was regarded as an emanation from Osiris, and was worshipped under various names and symbols.



Hieroglyphical name of Apis.

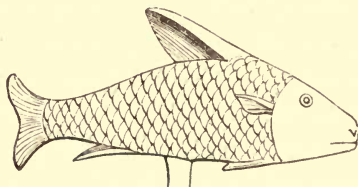
One of its names was Hapi, or Apis, which is the same as the sacred bull. There is extant a hymn to the Nile, written about the time of the Exodus, beginning thus—"Hail, O Nile, thou comest forth over this land, thou comest in peace, giving life to Egypt, O hidden God!" Plutarch, following the jargon of the priests, calls the Nile "the Father and Saviour of Egypt" (Symp. 8, 8); and affirms, "There is nothing so much honoured among the Egyptians as the river

Nile" (De Isid. et Osirid. c. 5). Even the fish and reptiles which it nourished, and the very reeds and flowers which grew in it, were held sacred. Herodotus says, "The Nile produces otters, which the Egyptians venerate, as they do the fish called lepidotus and the eel" (l. 2, c. 72). Strabo tells us, "The Egyptians worship two of the aquatic animals, the fish lepidotus and the oxyrhynchus" (l. 17, c. 40). Maximus Tyrius relates the following story (dissert. 38):—"An Egyptian woman nursed a young crocodile, and the



The Oxyrhynchus fish, in bronze.

Egyptians proclaimed the woman blessed, as being the nurse of a god. Some of them also adored both her and the young crocodile. This woman had a son who



Bronze Lepidotus.

was now a lad, and of an equal age with the god, his playfellow, with whom he had been nursed. The god indeed, so long as he was imbecile, was mild; but when he grew large he manifested his nature, and devoured the boy. The miserable woman pro-

claimed her son blessed in his death, as having become a gift to a domestic god."

About midsummer every year a great festival was celebrated throughout the country in honour of the Nile. Men and women assembled from all parts of the country in the towns of their respective Nomes ; grand festivities were proclaimed, and the religious solemnities which then took place were accompanied with feasting, dancing, and a general rejoicing. A wooden image of the river god was carried by the priests through the villages in solemn procession, appropriate hymns were sung, and the blessings of the anticipated inundation were invoked.

By the miraculous change of the waters into blood, a practical rebuke was given to these superstitions. This sacred and beautiful river, the benefactor and preserver of their country, this birthplace of their chief gods, this abode of their lesser deities, this source of all their prosperity, this centre of all their devotion, is turned to blood : the waters stink ; the canals and pools, the vessels of wood and vessels of stone, which were replenished from the river, all are alike polluted. The Nile, according to Pliny, was the "only source from whence the Egyptians obtained water for drinking" (Hist. Nat. l. 6, c. 33). This water was considered particularly sweet and refreshing ; so much so that the people were in the habit of provoking thirst in order that they might partake more freely of its soft and pleasant draughts. Now it was become abominable to them, and they loathed to drink of it.

The Nile water is still esteemed above any other

in Egypt. Mr. Lane says, "As the water of the wells in Cairo is slightly brackish, numerous sakkàs (carriers or sellers of water) obtain their livelihood by supplying its inhabitants with water from the Nile. . . . It is conveyed in skins by camels and asses. There are also many sakkàs who supply pass-



Sakkà Sharbeh.

engers in the streets of the metropolis with water. One of this occupation is called sakkà sharbeh : his kirbeh has a long brass spout, and he pours the water into a brass cup or an earthen kulleh for any one who would drink. There is a more numerous class who follow the same occupation, called 'hemalees.' The hemalee carries upon his back a vessel of porous grey earth : this vessel cools the water. From persons of the higher and middle orders he receives from one to



Hemalees.

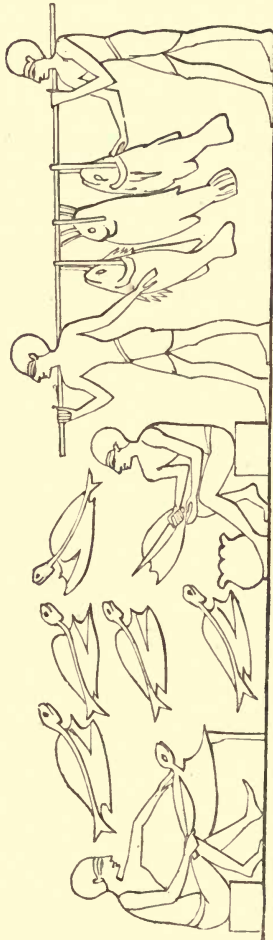
five faddahs for a draught of water (five are about equal to one farthing); from the poor either nothing, or a piece of bread, or some other article of food.”—*Modern Egyptians*. The general cry of these men is “O may God compensate me!” Wherever this cry is heard it is known that a sakkà is passing with water from the Nile.

The river of Egypt supplied the people also with a great deal of their food. Herodotus says, “The Egyptians live principally upon fish, either salted or dried in the sun” (l. ii. c. 77); and Diodorus tells us “The Nile abounds with multitudes of fish of all kinds. Not only are these sufficient to supply the inhabitants, but an innumerable quantity is salted and sent abroad. No river in the world is more beneficial and ser-

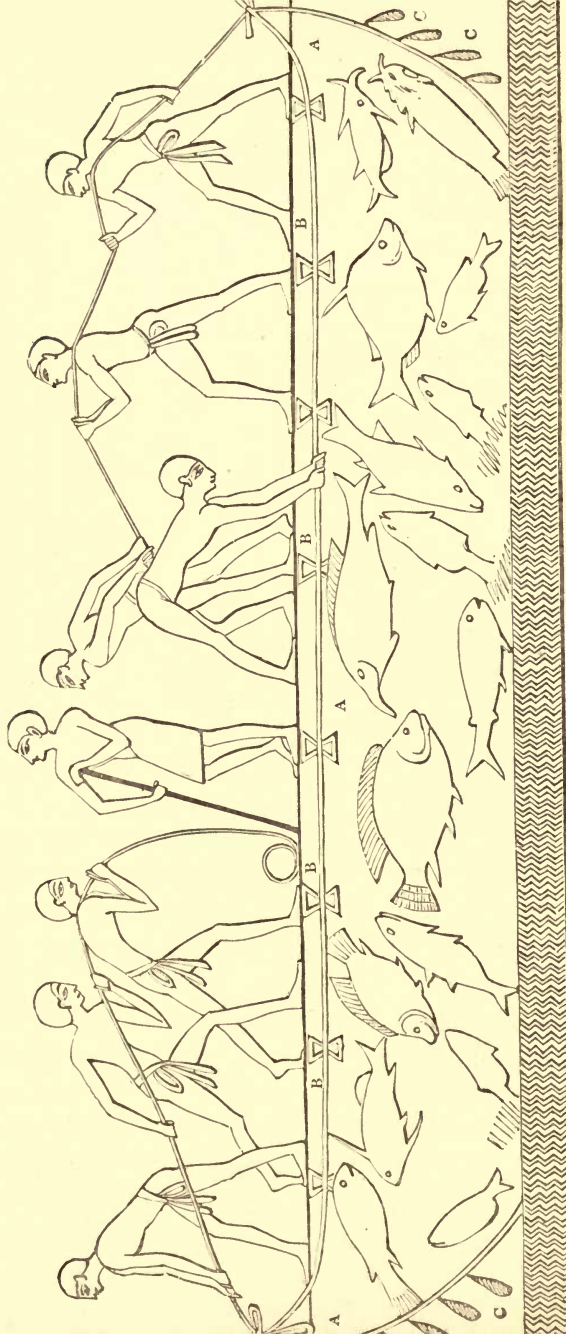
viceable to mankind than the Nile" (l. 1, c. 36). The Egyptians considered salt water fish to be unclean; but the fish of the Nile was much valued: a mortality among the fishes seems to have been an event not entirely unknown to them; for in a hymn to the Nile, written by the scribe Enna, such a calamity is attributed to the wrath of the Nile god Hapi.

By this first great wonder the supply both of meat and drink was cut off: the river itself was polluted, and the fish were all killed. God would show to this infatuated people the baseness of those natural creatures in which they trusted. "He turned their rivers into blood; and their floods, that they could not drink" (Ps. lxxviii. 44). "He turned their waters into blood, and slew their fish" (cv. 29).

Before the inundation, the comparatively clear stream of the river assumed a red and turbid appear-



Bringing in fish and opening them, preparatory to their being salted. In a Tomb near the Pyramids.



A A. The net.

B B. The floats.

C C. The leads.

Fishing with a drag net.

ance caused either by the red mud brought down from Abyssinia or by animalculæ ; it next assumed a green appearance. The god Nilus was represented of a blue and red colour, in allusion, perhaps, to these different appearances. Assuming that this plague took place after the return of the waters to their bed, and not before the overflow (see p. 46), the change to blood could not be attributed to that deity, nor to those natural causes which prevailed only in the earlier part of the year.

Apart from the suffering occasioned by this plague, there was something awful in the very nature of the miracle : it was not merely a "wonder," but a "sign." Prodigies of this kind were always looked upon as very fearful, and the Egyptians were addicted, more than any other people, to observing omens. The legends of antiquity are full of such portents, derived it may be from some indistinct tradition of the history before us. In Homer, before the death of Sarpedon,

"the weeping heavens distilled
A shower of blood o'er all the fatal field."

Iliad, xvi. v. 459.

According to Plutarch, "when Flaminius and Furius were leading an army against the Isubrians, the river which ran through the Picene was seen flowing with blood" (*Marcell*, c. 44). Livy tells us "the Alban water flowed in a bloody stream : this and other prodigies were expiated by the larger kind of victims" (l. xxvii. c. 11).

But the sign in the river of Egypt had a particular

meaning for those who dwelt upon its banks. The Egyptians, at an early period of their history, had been used to sacrifice human victims—a girl, or, as others say, a boy and a girl, to the Nile, at the time of its annual rising: this barbarous custom had long been discontinued; but at the time of the Exodus it was in a manner revived, the male children of the Israelites being cast into the river as they were born. Pharaoh had “charged all his people, saying, Every son that is born ye shall cast into the river” (Exod. i. 22). The people, who hated all strangers, considering it an abomination even to eat at the same table with an Hebrew, had willingly lent themselves to this act of cruelty, and had made themselves partakers in their ruler’s guilt. Upon this river Moses had himself been exposed in an ark of bulrushes; he had been “drawn out of the water,” as his name implied, to be a god to Pharaoh, not like those wretched Nile deities which he adored, but armed with irresistible might, as an avenger of blood. The cry of those many murdered innocents had come up before God’s throne, and Pharaoh and his people must answer for it.

We are reminded in this history of the description of a future judgment in the book of Revelation. “The third angel poured out his vial upon the rivers and fountains of waters; and they became blood. And I heard the angel of the waters say, Thou art righteous, O LORD, which art, and wast, and shalt be, because thou hast judged thus: for they have shed the blood of the saints and prophets, and thou hast

given them blood to drink; for they are worthy" (Rev. xvi. 4). Here was an evident retribution for the cruelties of which they had been guilty; here, too, was a manifestation of God's power and justice which all might understand. The natural effect of this would be to lead them to think seriously of the danger they were bringing upon themselves by daring to contend with One so great and righteous; and thus, by timely submission, to escape the greater evils of which this first plague was a warning and a *sign*.

CHAPTER V.

THE PLAGUE OF FROGS.

The Plague of Frogs—Purifications of the Egyptians prevented—The Frog an Emblem of Fecundity—Frog-headed Deities—Frogs revered—Greek Epigram—Parallel accounts from Classical Writers.

GRIEVOUS and terrible as the first of the plagues of Egypt must have been, it does not appear to have called forth any expression of alarm, or any act of submission, from the king. "Seven days were fulfilled after that the Lord had smitten the river." During that time there was no water to be had for any purpose, except in such small quantities as might be obtained by digging round about the river. Pharaoh, in his palace, would no doubt have enough of this; while water was to be had for labour, he would have it; and he cared but little for the affliction of his people as long as he himself could be exempt. But God was more merciful than Pharaoh; and although the king still refused what Moses had demanded, God at length removed the plague and made the river of Egypt to flow once more in its pure and unpolluted state. The Israelites suffered from this visitation as well as the Egyptians; the plague was upon them all, and they who were bondmen in the land would naturally bear even a greater share of the burden than the rest. If "all the Egyptians dug round about the

river for water" (Exod. vii. 24) doubtless the Israelites would be compelled to add this to their customary labours, and to dig, not for themselves only, but also for their masters.

God now sends his messengers again to Pharaoh to repeat their demand, and to urge it with new threats and judgments. The three plagues which followed—frogs, lice, and flies—were well calculated to humble the pride of this haughty monarch. They were such as he himself must suffer in common with his subjects; they were irritating and annoying, and yet brought with them no positive evil, beyond a temporary inconvenience: they were, at the same time, tokens of the almighty power of God, whose empire is over the waters, the land, and the air, and who makes even the meanest of his creatures to obey his will, and do him service.

The plague of frogs was threatened before it was inflicted; due warning of its approach was given; but Pharaoh, who had been unmoved in the presence of one great judgment, would not yield in the prospect of another. The sacred river was now made a second time the instrument of punishment. Out of its bed, and from its numerous watercourses, Moses called up an overwhelming swarm of frogs; upon the stretching out of Aaron's rod these creatures issued forth in such enormous numbers, that the land was full of them: they entered into the king's palace, and into the poor man's hut; they found their way to Pharaoh's bed-chamber, and leaped upon his bed; they spawned in the kneading-troughs and ovens; they spared not

the king's person nor his officers ; they were upon his servants and his people, and over all the land of Egypt. Harmless and contemptible as these animals may appear, they were capable of causing the greatest annoyance and discomfort ; there is only one kind of frog common in Egypt at the present day, the *Rana esculenta*, which is found also in most parts of Europe, Asia, and Africa, and even in England, and is valued in some countries as an article of food. Both the climate and soil of Egypt are very favourable to the production of these creatures, which are most abundant there in the month of September : the overflow of the river is then at its greatest extent, and the whole country is filled with the noise of their croaking. The frogs of Moses were probably larger

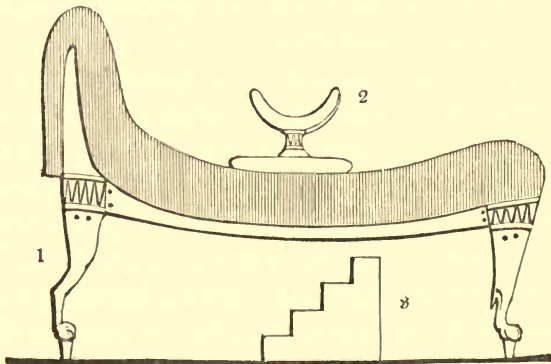


Fig. 1. A couch.
 2. Pillow or head stool.
 3. Steps for ascending a lofty couch.

in size and of a more active species than these, since they were able to enter the apartments of the palace, and to climb up on to the couches, which in the

houses of the rich were often of considerable height, and ascended by means of steps. The time of their appearance, too, was unnatural: the waters had subsided; for we are not told that they came up from the inundations, but from the rivers, canals, and ponds; and when the plague was removed, it is expressly said they remained in the river only. This is in accordance with the date suggested (page 46)—viz. the middle of November. The unseasonable nature of the visitation, as well as the sudden appearance and no less abrupt departure of the frogs, were not to be accounted for by any natural causes. It was evidently a miracle, and as such Pharaoh acknowledged it; and the meaning of it will become more apparent upon a due consideration of the following particulars.

The Egyptians considered it a necessary part of their religion to purify themselves by frequent washings in the river. It was by the river side that Moses was to wait for Pharaoh—"Get thee unto Pharaoh in the morning; lo, he goeth out unto the water; and thou shalt stand by the river's brink against he come" (Exod. vii. 15). Pharaoh was by his office a priest as well as king; and the priests were required, according to Herodotus, to wash themselves in cold water twice in the course of the day, and as often in the night" (l. ii. c. 37). The same writer describes other important ceremonies which call to mind the customs of the Scribes and Pharisees in later times, "as the washing of cups, and pots, brazen vessels, and of tables" (Mark vii. 4). "Of their customs," he says,

“one is to drink out of brasen goblets, which it is an universal practice among them to cleanse every day : they wear only linen, and that is always newly washed” (Herod. 1. ii. 37). These ablutions were rendered impossible, the sacred river, and all other streams and pools, being a second time polluted. Pharaoh, advancing to the river’s brink, is greeted by



King offering, and the Queen holding two emblems.

the hoarse croaking of millions of slimy frogs ; they bar his passage, they choke up the descent by which he would go down into the water ; he and his priests must cease from their superstitious washings ; they can no longer make clean the outside of the cup and platter, nor with pure hands practise iniquity.

There is no doubt that frogs were in Egypt the objects of some kind of superstitious regard. It is difficult to say whether they were most revered

or feared, but, either as good agents or evil, they were numbered among the sacred animals of the Egyptians. The magicians used them in their divinations, and pretended to foretell future events by the changes and swellings which these creatures undergo. Frogs were supposed to be generated from the mud of the river. A frog sitting upon the sacred lotus was symbolical of the return of the Nile to its bed after the inundations. The name *Chrur*, which seems to have been derived from the sound of its croaking, was also used, with only a slight variation, *Hhrur*, to denote the Nile descending. Seated upon a date-stone, with a young palm-leaf rising from its back, it was a type of man in embryo. The importance attached to the frog in some parts of Egypt is further apparent from its having been embalmed and honoured with burial in the tombs of Thebes; and from its frequent appearance upon the monuments and inscriptions. Among the former is the god Pthah, having the head of a frog, and representing the creative power of the deity; there is also a frog-headed goddess named Heka, who was worshipped in the district of Sah, as the wife of Chnum, the god of the cataracts, and to whose favour the annual overflow of the Nile, with all the benefits which followed, was ascribed.



Frog and
Palm-leaf.

Plutarch says the frog was an emblem of the sun, and that the brazen palm-tree at Delphi, sacred to Apollo or Osiris, had a great number of frogs engraved upon its base. In hieroglyphics the frog is an emblem of fecundity, an idea which arose natur-

ally from its connection with the river. Pliny celebrates the extraordinary virtue of the water of the Nile, not only as a fertiliser of the soil, but also as a promoter of births in the human subject. "When a greater number of children than three is produced at one birth" (Hist. Nat. l. vii. c. 3), he says "it is regarded as portentous except indeed in Egypt,



Frog-headed Deities.

where the water of the Nile is used for drink as a promoter of fecundity." Aristotle also says, "One woman in Egypt brought forth in four births, twenty children; for she had five at a time, and the greater

part of them were reared" (Hist. Anim. l. vii. c. 4). Compare this with the account given in the first chapter of Exodus. "The children of Israel were fruitful, and increased abundantly, and multiplied, and waxed exceeding mighty; and the land was filled with them" (Exod. i. 7).

As the wealth and prosperity of Egypt depended upon the annual overflowing of the Nile, it is not surprising that the people of that land, who seem in every possible instance to have worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, should have ascribed peculiar honour to the frogs, which abounded most in the time of the inundations: they may have regarded them as in some sense the authors of their benefits, or rather as beneficent agents sent forth by their sacred river to assist and direct its fertilising process. Mungo Park describes the lively sensations of gratitude and joy with which he was affected, during one of his excursions in the desert, on hearing the croaking of innumerable frogs at a short distance from him. By such sounds the traveller, when nearly perishing with thirst, was guided to the spot where the life-restoring water was to be found: the frogs were indeed so numerous, and the noise they emitted so loud, that before he could drink from the pool, it was necessary for him to cut down a branch from a tree, and to beat the water with it until he and his horse had satisfied their thirst. The Egyptians, under similar conditions, would be disposed to offer homage to the creatures by whose instrumentality their necessities had been relieved, and we have some traces of

such a feeling in a Greek epigram or inscription by an unknown author, which may be thus translated :—

“ This frog, attendant on the nymphs, their guard,
 A little leaping, moisture-loving bard,
 A traveller, grateful for his thirst allayed,
 Moulded in brass and set up in the shade,
 An offering to the genius of the glade ;
 For as he wandered in the burning plain
 Fainting, he heard his low amphibious strain,
 And guided by the hoarse, refreshing sound,
 Came to the place where, from the reedy ground,
 The cooling waters spread their life around.”

Anthol Grec.

But it is probable that the sacred character of these animals was attributable, in some parts of Egypt at least, to the fears entertained for them by the Egyptians, as spirits of evil. There are even now in Africa tribes of ignorant heathen, worshippers of devils, who bow down before the most hideous images they can invent or fashion, and call upon them with abject supplications, in order to propitiate their fetish, and to turn aside the evils he might bring upon them. St. John, in the book of Revelation, represents the frog as an evil spirit ; and his emblems were generally derived from symbolical ideas which prevailed of old. “ I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet ; for they are the spirits of devils, working miracles ” (Rev. xvi. 13). Such probably were the frogs which the magicians of Egypt brought forth in opposition to Moses, spirits of devils. Satan, who had greater license and a

wider range^d in those dark times and places than he has now, sent out his demons in this form, at the call of his false prophets, to confirm the Egyptians in their rebellion against God ; and “the magicians did so with their enchantments, and brought up frogs upon the land of Egypt” (Exod. viii. 7).

Whether the Egyptians looked upon these reptiles as benefactors, or dreaded them as ministers of evil, the wonderful plague with which they were now afflicted was a judgment against them for their miserable superstition, and a sign which they could scarcely fail to understand. Fond as they were of a multitude of deities, here were more than they could wish for or endure. David says : “He sent frogs among them, which destroyed them” (Ps. lxxviii. 45) : it was not a mere inconvenience, therefore, but a real punishment ; yet we may suppose the Egyptians would not venture to kill or even to resist their sacred tormentors. So terrible and wide-spread was the evil, that we find traces of it in the oldest historians, whose accounts, being derived only from tradition, are inaccurate as to place and people, but founded, we may suppose, upon the realities which are here recorded. Diodorus tells us of “a people called Autariats, who were forced, by frogs bred in the clouds, which poured down upon them instead of rain, to forsake their country” (l. iii. c. 30) ; Pliny tells a similar story of the inhabitants of a district in Gaul. The fact that the frogs of Egypt were sent upon the people by God’s command would naturally lead to the idea of their descent from the clouds ; while the

exodus, both of Israelites and Egyptians, which followed soon afterwards, might give occasion to the story that the people were driven out of their country by the plague (l. viii. c. 43).

Even if the Egyptians would attempt to deliver themselves from the invading host, how was such an enemy to be resisted? Let them beat down the frogs by thousands, millions would still come up; let them gather the dead together in heaps till the land stank, fresh swarms of the living would continue to advance. Where now are the king's guards? Where are his armies, his horsemen, his chariots, his captains of hundreds and captains of thousands? Where are his bondsmen and slaves? They are powerless; they are altogether a vain thing. Pharaoh has hardened or emboldened himself to fight against God! Let him begin by fighting against these meanest of his creatures. And where are his priests,—his prophets? Can they not propitiate these unwholesome deities? Is there no sacrifice that they can offer to induce them to withdraw? Where are the magicians and sorcerers? Cannot they command their own familiar spirits? No; they can add to their number, and call forth more frogs upon the land, but they cannot deliver themselves from the intolerable burden with which they are afflicted.

“Verily God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen” (1 Cor. i. 28). If this were not a work of divine retribution, we might almost be pro-

voked to smile at the strangeness of the visitation, and to amuse ourselves in thinking over some of the accidents with which it must have been attended ; and the words of the Psalmist, descriptive of the high disdain of God for the miserable pride and arrogance of man, naturally occur to us—" He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh : the LORD shall have them in derision " (Ps. ii. 4). " He poureth contempt upon princes " (Ps. cvii. 40).

That Pharaoh recognised this swarm of frogs as a miracle, notwithstanding the successful imitation of it by his own sorcerers, is evident from his appeal to Moses. It was the first time that he showed any sign of relenting. He called for Moses and Aaron, and said, " Entreat the LORD, that he may take away the frogs from me, and from my people ; and I will let the people go, that they may do sacrifice unto the LORD " (Exod. viii. 8). " And Moses cried unto the LORD because of the frogs which he had brought against Pharaoh, and the LORD did according to the word of Moses ; and the frogs died out of the houses, out of the villages, and out of the fields. And they gathered them together upon heaps ; and the land stank. But when Pharaoh saw that there was respite, he hardened his heart, and hearkened not unto them ; as the LORD had said " (Exod. viii. 12).

CHAPTER VI.

THE PLAGUE OF LICE.

The Plague of Lice—The Priests and Temples again defiled—The Dust of Egypt sacred : cast upon the Head—The Magicians defeated—The “Finger of God”—Shameful character of this Plague.

IT has been already observed that the Egyptians, and especially their priests, were particularly nice and delicate in their outward habits. When their sacred river was turned into blood it caused a desecration of many of their deities, and put a stop to nearly all their religious ceremonies ; and when the plague of frogs choked up their streams and pools, the frequent ablutions, which they regarded as of infinite importance, were a second time prevented. The third plague seems to have been directed against the same ceremonial practices. It brought pollution for the third time upon the Egyptians, upon the priests and upon the people, upon the temple and the deities within them, and upon all the land of Egypt.

Pharaoh had been compelled by the intolerable nuisance of the frogs, which thronged his own palace, even to the bed-chambers and the ovens, to humble himself and entreat that the plague might be removed. Moses, with a view perhaps to convince the king that neither the appearance of these creatures, nor their destruction, depended upon natural causes, had asked him to fix a time—any time that he

might choose—for the removal of the plague. “Glory over me,” that is, command me, “when shall I entreat for thee, and for thy servants, and for thy people, to destroy the frogs from thee and from thy houses?” (Exod. viii. 9). Pharaoh, hoping, no doubt, that the frogs might yet disappear without the word of Moses, puts off the deliverance, earnestly as he desires it, until the morrow; and Moses shows by his reply that he appreciates the motive of this strange delay, and, at the same time, accepts the challenge: “Be it according to thy word; that thou mayest know that there is none like unto the LORD our God.”

Yet, although the king had thus proved the power of God, and had put his servants to the test, as soon as he saw that there was respite he hardened his heart, and hearkened not unto them, and refused to let the people go, as the LORD had said.

The third plague, the plague of lice, was now sent upon the land without any warning. This time the dust of the earth was raised up and quickened into life for the punishment of those who dwelt thereon. “The LORD said unto Moses, Say unto Aaron, Stretch out thy rod, and smite the dust of the land, that it may become lice throughout all the land of Egypt” (Exod. viii. 16). Here was another blow aimed at their false deities, another reproof for the pretended sanctity under which so much iniquity and uncleanness lay concealed. The Egyptian priests were very particular not to harbour any vermin, and considered it a dreadful profanation of their temple if any animalculæ or creeping things were carried into them.

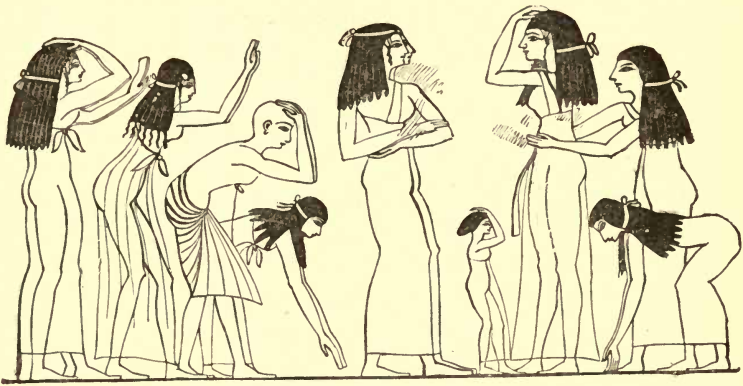
Herodotus says :—"The priests every third day shave every part of their bodies, to prevent any louse, or other detestable insect, from adhering to those who are engaged in the service of the gods" (l. ii. c. 37). "The people never wear any woollen garment when they are to enter a temple, nor is anything of this sort used in their burials, for it would be esteemed an impurity" (l. ii. c. 81). Plutarch also says, "The priests of Isis wear vestments of linen, which of all other kinds is least likely to breed lice or vermin" (*De Isid. et Osirid.* c. 4).

The plague of lice was not only in the garments, but also in the bodies of the people; wherever the dust fell, there these horrible parasites appeared; if it alighted upon their clothes, their clothes, whether of linen or flannel, were full of them; if it settled upon their naked skins, the skin was penetrated by them. It was a general plague; no part of the country was exempt. The words of the inspired history are, "All the dust of the land became lice throughout all the land of Egypt" (*Exod. viii. 17*). The Psalmist says, "He spake, and there came lice in all their coasts" (*Ps. cv. 31*). It was a plague which spared neither age nor sex, neither clean nor unclean, neither things sacred nor things secular; wherever there was dust in Egypt, there it "became lice in man and in beast."

Travellers speak of the dust of Egypt as in itself almost a plague, prevailing chiefly during the winter months. Pocke says, "We travelled to Achmim through clouds of dust raised by a high wind, which

intercepted our view as much as if we had been travelling in a fog; and arrived there on the eve of Christmas." This is the date assigned to the plague of lice in our calendar of events (ch. 3). Mr. Lane writes, "There is one great source of discomfort arising from the dryness of the atmosphere, namely, an excessive quantity of dust." The lice of Egypt are also described in very thrilling terms, "a sort of tick not larger than a grain of sand, which, when filled with blood, expands to the size of a hazel nut." These prevail at certain seasons to such an extent that Sir Samuel Baker says "it is as though the very dust were turned into lice." In Deuteronomy, where Moses forewarns the Israelites of the plagues which God would send upon them in the land of Canaan if they should rebel against him, he says, "The LORD shall make the rain of thy land powder and dust: from heaven shall it come down upon thee, until thou be destroyed" (xxviii. 24). Their reminiscences of the land of Egypt would enable them to appreciate this figure.

The curse of lice was upon the soil of Egypt, which was esteemed sacred, and worshipped as the father of the gods. Under the name Seb, the black mud from the Nile, which, as it became dry under the rays of the sun (another of their deities), gave birth to these disgusting creatures, was especially venerated, and the country itself was called after it, *Chemi*, or black. The Egyptians were accustomed to humble themselves in many of their religious ceremonies, and especially in their acts of mourning, by throwing dust



People throwing dust on their heads, in token of grief.

upon their heads. On the death of their kings or public men, and even when a cat or any other sacred animal perished, they ran through the streets lamenting and covering themselves with dust. At certain seasons of the year also public lamentations took place in honour of their gods, accompanied with the same gestures (see chap. xiii.—the Death of the First-born). The dust of the earth now turned against them, to reprove them for their superstition, for wherever they cast it, it became a loathsome parasite upon them.

The magicians who had succeeded in imitating the two former plagues were baffled by this. Satan had helped them at the first, so that they could produce the blood and the frogs, as if in rivalry with Moses; but the command of God was now upon him and his hosts—"Hitherto shalt thou come, and no farther." When the blasphemers accused our blessed Saviour of casting out devils through Beelzebub, the chief of

the devils, he answered them according to their folly, and then added—"If I with the finger of God cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you" (Luke xi. 20). At his word even the devils confessed him—"I know thee who thou art; the Holy One of God" (Luke iv. 34). So in this history the "finger of God" is the instrument by which the messengers of Satan are defeated. They recognised it, and confessed it. "The magicians did so with their enchantments to bring forth lice, but they could not." Then the magicians said unto Pharaoh—"This is the finger of God" (Exod. viii. 18).

This "finger," which may be held to represent the power of God exercised in its lightest form, a finger only, was sufficient to curb all the power of Satan, and to put his prophets to an open shame. They were helpless: they could neither make matters better for the relief of the people, nor worse for their own credit. The priests, being polluted by this horrible infection, could not stand to minister before their deities. The people could not, in their uncleanness, be admitted within the precincts of their temples. If they would offer sacrifice, there were no victims fit for the purpose. Even the gods, the oxen, and goats, and cats, were defiled with the vermin. The Egyptians not only writhed under the loathsome scourge, but felt themselves humbled and disgraced by it. Josephus notices this;—"Pharaoh," he says, "was so confounded at this new plague, that, what with the danger, the *scandal*, and the nastiness of it, he was half sorry for what he had done" (b. ii. c. 14).

The plague assumed the form of a disease, being "in the people" As Josephus says again, "The bodies of the people bred them, and they were all covered over with them, gnawing and tearing intolerably, and no remedy, for baths and ointments did no good" (*Ibid.*) But, however distressing to their bodies, the foul and disgraceful character of the plague, and the offence brought upon their religion by the defilement of their deities and the interruption of all their religious ceremonies, was its most afflictive feature.

And in this we may suppose the manifest propriety of the visitation must have been understood, if it was not acknowledged. It was a reproof to the Egyptians for the uncleanness of their religious ceremonies, which were carried on under an outward show of purity. God had sent upon them all a ceremonial and a real uncleanness. They recognised his judgment, and confessed—"This is the finger of God."

If they had acknowledged this under the two former plagues, it would have been less remarkable; for then Moses had distinctly told them what they were to expect. He had pointed out to them beforehand the judgment which the God of Israel, the great I AM, would send upon them. But now they had received no such warning. They knew nothing of the command of God to Moses. They had not seen or heard of the outstretching of Aaron's wand, by which the loathsome swarm of vermin was called into existence. They knew only that they and their deities together were once more rebuked and made contemptible, and that a miracle had been wrought

by Moses, the servant of God, which it was beyond their power either to imitate or to resist.

But although the magicians and priests were thus convinced, the heart of Pharaoh was still hardened, and he hearkened not unto them, as the Lord had said. He would neither humble himself before Moses, nor even entreat for his people that the plague might be removed. He would bear the shameful burden, and writhe under it in sullen defiance, rather than confess its justice. But God will have mercy, and not sacrifice. He had pity upon the miserable Egyptians even when their own king had none. It was enough that priests and people had confessed the power and justice of Jehovah in the visitation. He had regard to their submission rather than to the obstinacy of their ruler; and as the plague had come suddenly upon them without warning, so now it was removed, as it would seem, without observation. The living creatures returned again to the dust from which they had been created, and the land, once more, had respite.

CHAPTER VII.

THE PLAGUE OF FLIES.

The Plague of Flies—Sonnini's account—Of what kind—Fly gods of the Ancients—Baal-zebul—Achoreus, the Memphian priest—Tammuz and the Chambers of Imagery—Similar Visitations recorded by Greek Historians.

THE plague of flies is the first in order of the three which constitute the second group or series into which these visitations are generally divided. It came not without warning. Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and as he did not humble himself under the plague of lice, while it was yet upon the people, it could not be supposed that he would yield now that it was removed. Yet God gives him opportunity; before another judgment is poured out upon the land, Pharaoh has again the choice proposed to him, whether he will hearken to the word of God, or deliberately disobey it.

“And the LORD said unto Moses, Rise up early in the morning, and stand before Pharaoh (lo, he cometh forth to the water), and say unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Let my people go, that they may serve me: Else, if thou wilt not let my people go, behold, I will send swarms of flies upon thee, and upon thy servants, and upon thy people, and into thy houses: and the houses of the Egyptians shall be full of swarms of flies, and also the ground whereon

they are. And I will sever in that day the land of Goshen, in which my people dwell, that no swarms of flies shall be there; to the end thou mayest know that I am the LORD in the midst of the earth. And I will put a division between my people and thy people: to-morrow shall this sign be" (Exod. viii. 20).

No answer seems to have been vouchsafed to this appeal; the message was undoubtedly delivered, but nothing is said of Pharaoh's reply; the narrative proceeds immediately, "And the LORD did so: and there came a grievous swarm of flies into the house of Pharaoh, and into his servants' houses, and into all the land of Egypt: the land was corrupted by reason of the swarm of flies."

This fourth plague happened, in all probability, about the middle of January: that is, in Egypt, the coldest season of the year, and therefore the time when a swarm of flies would, in the course of nature, be least expected. Egypt has always suffered more or less severely in hot weather from the various sorts of flies which arise from the marshy lands. "The most numerous and troublesome among the insects which infest these countries," says Sonnini, "are flies, which cruelly torment both men and animals. It is impossible to form a just idea of their obstinate perseverance when they wish to fasten upon any particular part of the body, as when they are driven away they return and settle again in the same moment, and their pertinacity tires out the most patient sufferer. They particularly delight in fastening upon the corners of the eyes and the edges of the

eyelids, to which tender parts they are attracted by a slight humidity." Mr. Lane says—"In spring, summer, and autumn, flies are so abundant as to be extremely annoying during the daytime, and mosquitoes are troublesome at night, unless a curtain be made use of to keep them away, and often in the day." Herodotus also makes mention of the flies of Egypt, and describes the nets with which the inhabitants protected themselves against them. In winter, however, these insects are rarely troublesome, and Pharaoh may have thought that the threat of such a plague was but little likely to be fulfilled. For the same reason the miraculous character of the visitation, when it came, was the more readily acknowledged. "Pharaoh called for Moses and for Aaron, and said, Go ye, sacrifice to your God in the land" (Exod. viii. 25). "I will let you go, that ye may sacrifice to the LORD your God in the wilderness; only ye shall not go very far away: entreat for me" (viii. 28).

It is a question not easily to be answered, what kind of flies these were. The Hebrew word is very indefinite; but the Septuagint gives it, both here and in the 104th Psalm, as the *κυνόμυια*, or dog-fly. This insect is, in some seasons, a far worse plague in Egypt than even the mosquito. Its bite is sharp and painful, causing severe inflammation, especially in the eyelids. Coming in immense swarms, they cover all objects in black and loathsome masses, and attack every exposed part of a traveller's person with incredible pertinacity. By some it is supposed that

the beetle is the insect signified ; in which case the plague could hardly fail to be recognised as an apt retribution for the idolatrous reverence paid by the Egyptians to that creature. Sacred beetles have been found at Thebes embalmed, and their forms, cut out of wood or stone, are often met with in the mummy



Flies, Beetles, etc., from the hieroglyphics.



Sacred Scarabæi and Fly from the Sculptures.

A Stone Scarabæus ; covered with wings, and the sun and asps, of silver.

chests and burial-places of Egypt. In the hieroglyphics it is an emblem of creative power, or life, and stands for the word *cheper*, to exist, or to become. The scarabæus and other genera of beetles were sacred to the sun. There was also a god "Chepera," the creator, who was represented in the form, or with the head of, a beetle. A plague of beetles would

cause the Egyptians no little embarrassment, as well as inconvenience; for they would consider it an act of sacrilege to attempt to rid themselves of their tormentors, and would even shrink from the guilt of crushing them accidentally under their feet, though the ground might be alive with them.

The flies of this plague were evidently of a formidable kind, and very grievous. The Psalmist says—"He sent flies among them, which devoured them" Ps. (lxxviii. 45). There is a kind of beetle common in Egypt which is very destructive, inflicting painful bites, and consuming all sorts of materials. The mosquito also, which is a terrible nuisance in all hot climates, and especially in the vicinity of rivers, answers to this description; and the house-fly, which swarms in Egypt, carries corruption, and not unfrequently infectious disease, wherever it alights. It is probable, however, that the flies of this plague were of various kinds, including the above and many others, for David says again—"He spake the word, and there came all manner of flies," or "divers sorts of flies" (Ps. cv. 31). The marginal reading gives a similar description, "a mixture of noisome beasts." There is no reason, therefore, for supposing that the plague was limited to any one species; on the contrary, as the flies were everywhere, upon the people and in their houses, on the ground and in the air, and in all the land of Egypt, it appears almost certain that they were of different habits, and therefore of different species. There were flies that devoured, and flies that stung; flies that corrupted, and flies that

hovered whirring in the air ; flies upon men, inflaming their eyelids and blinding them, and flies upon the cattle ; there were beetles that crawled upon the ground, and perhaps also bees, and wasps, and hornets, pursuing the people fiercely.

It is doubtful whether some kind of flies were not among the sacred insects of the Egyptians. Some of them have been preserved, perhaps accidentally, in the mummy cloths, and some few, among which are the house-fly, the wasp, and the butterfly, are represented in paintings on the monuments and walls.

To make the miracle more evident, these pests, while vexing the Egyptians almost beyond endurance, giving them no rest either by night or day, were not suffered to approach the Israelites. "In the land of Goshen were no flies." Although the tract of country occupied by the Jews appears to have been in that part of Egypt where flies would naturally be produced most freely—namely, in the low, well-watered regions—the flies which swarmed on all sides never crossed their frontier. God ordered them hither and thither at his pleasure ; they came into this city, and avoided that ; they carried misery and corruption into these houses, and avoided those.

The Egyptians held all the four elements (as they were called) in idolatrous esteem. The air, from which the flies descended upon them was worshipped in the person of a god called Shu, the son of Ra, or in that Isis, the queen of the heavens. In the former plagues the power of Jehovah over the waters and the dry land had been manifested. Now the air sent

forth its winged hosts to do his pleasure. Thus each element in turn was made an instrument of rebuke and punishment to Pharaoh, and the universal sovereignty of Jehovah was displayed, according to His word—"That thou mayest know that I am the LORD in the midst of the earth."

Against these flies, which are more or less troublesome in all hot climates, the ancients used to invoke special deities. The Greeks had their Zeus Apomyios, Jupiter the deliverer from flies; and the Romans their Hercules Myiagros, the fly-disperser. In the temples of these deities it is said that no flies were ever seen; and the altar of Venus at Paphos enjoyed a similar immunity.

Pliny tells us—"The people of Elis invoke their god Myiagros whenever the vast multitude of flies are bringing a pestilence upon them" (Hist. Nat. l. 10, c. 40); and in another place he observes—"It is generally believed that there is no creature less docile, or less intelligent, than the fly—a circumstance which makes it all the more marvellous that at the sacred games at Olympia, immediately after the immolation of the bull in honour of the god Myiodes, whole crowds of flies take their departure from that territory" (l. 29, c. 34).

Ælian, in his history of animals, asserts that not only the fly-god was worshipped, but that even the flies themselves were treated with divine honours. "At Actium," he says, "they sacrifice an ox to the flies" (l. 2, c. 8).

These fly-gods, of which, as it will be presently

seen, there were traces in Egypt, as well as among other nations, were all put to confusion by the plague which now swept over that country. Sacrifices, prayers, ceremonies, were of no avail: the priests could do nothing to deliver the nation from the worry and distress, the sickness and corruption, brought upon them. The God of Moses alone could command the flies, for they were his creatures; He could send them hither and thither, making a distinction between his own people and the worshippers of idols, causing them to spare the one and to afflict the other: but the gods of Egypt, the fly-destroyers and dispersers, were but vain things, and could not even deliver themselves and their altars from the swarms which lighted on them.

Although the plague of flies in Egypt is the most notable instance of the kind in history, it is far from being the only one. When God had brought out his people from captivity, and was leading them towards the land of promise, he said to Moses, "I will send hornets before thee, which shall drive out the Hivite, the Canaanite, and the Hittite, from before thee" (Exod. xxiii. 28); and in the book of Joshua we have the fulfilment of this promise: "I sent the hornet before you, which drove them out from before you, even the two kings of the Amorites" (Josh. xxiv. 12). The fly-god was doubtless among the idols of Canaan, having been imported from Egypt by the Phœnicians. The land was full of such deities, and it was on account of their various and shameful idolatries that the Canaanites were driven out of it. The

Israelites, in their turn, suffered a like judgment. It is written in Isaiah "It shall come to pass in that day (the day of God's visitation upon Ahab and the Jews), that the Lord shall hiss for the fly that is in the uttermost part of the rivers of Egypt, and for the bee that is in the land of Assyria" (Isa. vii. 18). These insects are here used only in a figure to represent the armies of the Egyptians and Assyrians, and to signify their number and destructiveness. But the employment of such emblems was not without meaning, for the Jews had adopted many of the idolatries of Egypt and of Canaan, and this of the fly-god among the rest. When Ahaziah had fallen down through a lattice in his upper chamber, and was sick, he sent messengers, not to the prophets of Israel, but to one of these idols: "Go, enquire of Baalzebub, the god of Ekron, whether I shall recover of the disease" (2 Kings i. 2). For this the LORD rebuked him by his servant Elijah: "Is it not because there is not a God in Israel, that ye go to enquire of Baalzebub, the god of Ekron? Now therefore thus saith the LORD, Thou shalt not come down from that bed on which thou art gone up, but shalt surely die." The meaning of the word Baalzebub is "the Lord of Flies;" *Zebub*, or *dthebáb*, is the name of a fly common in these days in the desert, and much feared by the Arabs on account of its causing a disease among their camels, to which they give the same name. In the Septuagint, where the word Baalzebub is translated "the Baal of Flies," the word Ekron is written *Accaron* (Δεῦτε καὶ ἐπιζήτωσατε ἐν τῷ Βάαλ. μύϊαν θεὸν Ἀκκαρόν),

and this is nearly the same as one of the gods of Egypt, named Acchor. There was in Egypt, near the lake Moeris, a city called Achoris; and Lucan mentions a priest of Memphis named Achoreus, whose office it was, probably, to minister before this idol Acchor, the priests being accustomed to take the name of their deity, as has been shown in the case of Potipherah (page 17)—

“The chief in honour, and the best,
Was old Achoreus, the Memphian priest :
In Isis and Osiris he believed,
And reverend tales from sire to son received ;
Could mark the swell of Nile’s increasing tide ;
And many an Apis, in his time, had died.”

Pharsalia, l. 8, v. 475.

It would seem, then, that Ahaziah sent to consult one of the Canaanitish idols whose worship had been brought from Egypt; and it was just that the fly of that country should be summoned for the chastisement of a people who could be guilty of such an impiety.

The prophet Ezekiel describes a similar act of superstition among the abominations practised by the Jewish priests even in the holy temple. “There sat women weeping for Tammuz” (Ezek. viii. 10-14), and there were the “chambers of imagery,” in which were “every form of creeping things, and abominable beasts, and all the idols of the house of Israel, portrayed upon the wall round about.” Tammuz was a deity of the Syrians, the same as Adonis among the Greeks; and the Syrians had learned his history, and adopted this custom of weeping for

him in their temples from the Egyptians. We may infer, therefore, that the creeping things which were painted in every form upon the walls of these chambers of imagery were the sacred beetles, flies, bees, and other insects held in idolatrous reverence among those nations.

We find similar instances of divine retribution in profane history also. Diodorus Siculus relates that "a large tract of country bordering on that of the Acridophagi, or locust-eaters, was formerly inhabited, but in consequence of an extraordinary fall of rain, immense numbers of spiders and scorpions were bred there, and the people were driven out. The inhabitants at first endeavoured to master them; but whoever was bitten or stung by them fell down dead, and the survivors were compelled to abandon the country" (l. 3, c. 30). Ælian tells us, "A swarm of flies drove out the people of Megara, and a plague of wasps the inhabitants of Phaselis" (Hist. Anim. l. 11, c. 28).

Such plagues as these would be attributed by the ancients to accident, or to peculiarities of weather or season; but we may conclude, with more reason, that as it was in the land of Egypt, so in other heathen countries God ordered these visitations with a special object. "Shall there be evil in a city, and the LORD hath not done it?" (Amos iii. 6). When God sends the noisome beast, or any other plague, upon a land, it is that the inhabitants thereof may recognise his judgment, and confess that "He hath not done without cause all that He hath done in it" (Ezek. xiv. 23).

CHAPTER VIII.

THE VERY GRIEVOUS MURRAIN.

The Abomination of the Egyptians—The Ox a Symbol of their Chief Deities—One God sacrificed to another—Dagon—The Murrain—The Bull Apis : described by Herodotus, Diodorus, Strabo, and Plutarch—Other Sacred Animals—The Golden Calf in the Wilderness—The Bull of Siva—Appropriate Character of this Plague.

WHEN Pharaoh, goaded into submission by the intolerable visitation of the flies, had sent for Moses and Aaron, and had bidden them "Go ye, sacrifice to your God in the land" (Exod. viii. 25), Moses answered him, "It is not meet so to do; for we shall sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians to the LORD our God: lo, shall we sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians before their eyes, and shall they not stone us?" The "abomination of the Egyptians," it need hardly be remarked, was the ox, to which that people paid divine honours. So Chemosh is called the abomination of Moab, and Moloch the abomination of Ammon (1 Kings xi. 7). Throughout Egypt the ox was worshipped as the symbol or manifestation of their greatest deities, Osiris, Athum, Ptah, and Isis; and it may well have appeared an unheard-of and intolerable thing, that the deities of one country should be offered up in sacrifice to the god of another, and that a subject,

people. This was the humiliation which Moses was about to inflict upon the Egyptians, although not in their presence.

When the Philistines took the ark of God, and brought it into their temple at Ashdod, the idol Dagon was compelled to bow before it. "When they of Ashdod came early in the morning, behold, Dagon was fallen upon his face to the earth before the ark of the LORD" (1 Sam. v. 3). Being restored to his place, a still greater humiliation was prepared both for the idol and his worshippers; for "the next morning, behold, Dagon was fallen again upon his face to the ground before the ark of the LORD; and the head of Dagon, and both the palms of his hands, were cut off upon the threshold" (v. 4). So now the Dagon of Egypt, the cattle which Pharaoh and his servants revered as deities, must fall down and perish before the God of Israel. It mattered not that the Israelites were at that time in the house of bondage: the ark of God, too, was in captivity when Dagon fell down before it. God had suffered his people to be afflicted, but he had heard their cry, and was come down to visit and relieve them; and that nation which evil entreated them he himself would judge.

Pharaoh would not have troubled himself about the humiliation of his gods; for he appears to have had very little religion of any kind, either true or false. He would have given up the sacred cattle to be slaughtered under his own eyes; but the priests and the people would not endure it. "Will they not

stone us?" said Moses; from which it appears that the punishment of sacrilege among the Egyptians was the same which God afterwards appointed for the Israelites—"He that blasphemeth the name of the LORD, he shall surely be put to death; all the congregation shall certainly stone him" (Lev. xxiv. 16).

To compromise the matter, it was agreed that the Israelites should go a short distance into the wilderness to perform their sacrifices; and Moses, having received a promise to this effect from Pharaoh, entreated the Lord to take away the flies from the land. "And the LORD removed the swarms of flies from Pharaoh, and from his servants, and from his people: there remained not one. And Pharaoh hardened his heart at this time also, and would not let the people go" (Exod. viii. 31, 32).

But although the king may thus forbid the sacrifice of his cattle by the priests of Israel, he cannot prevent their destruction by the hand of God. One woe is past, but behold another woe cometh quickly. "Then the LORD said unto Moses, Go in unto Pharaoh, and tell him, Thus saith the LORD God of the Hebrews, Let my people go, that they may serve me: for if thou refuse to let them go, and wilt hold them still, behold the hand of the LORD is upon thy cattle which is in the field, upon the horses, upon the asses, upon the camels, upon the oxen, and upon the sheep: there shall be a very grievous murrain" (Exod. ix. 1). Instead now of a few of the beasts of the Israelites being offered in the wilderness upon God's altar, the

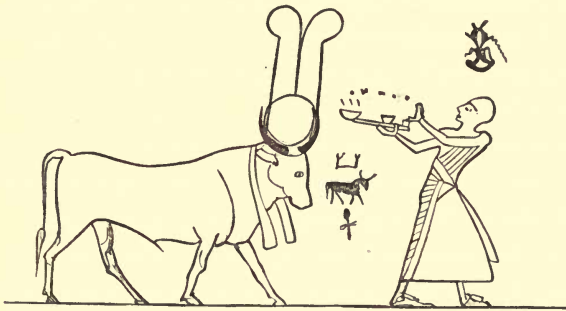
cattle of Egypt everywhere are stricken, the horses and the asses, the sheep and the camels, perish with the oxen, and there is a very grievous murrain.

St. Paul represents the whole creation groaning and travailing in pain together by reason of man's sin, the curse of disobedience having fallen upon the whole world, and upon all that it contains. So now in Egypt the dumb beasts were made to suffer for the wickedness of their masters. Pharaoh and the Egyptians had sinned; but these sheep and oxen, these camels and asses, what had they done? They are made subject to man, and must therefore be partakers of his plagues: God has so ordered it, and it could not well be otherwise. The brutes lost their paradise when man forfeited his, and now they are dependent upon him, and must be his fellow-sufferers, though they be not fellow-sinners.

But while the cattle of the Egyptians are destroyed, those of the Israelites are untouched. Looking upon the pastures of Pharaoh, where the cattle were wont to feed, in the richest borders of the Nile, we see the consequences of sin bringing forth death: "For the wickedness of the land the beasts are consumed. How long shall the land mourn and the herbs of the field wither for the wickedness of them that dwell therein?" (Jerem. xii. 4); but looking upon the fields of Goshen, we behold the blessedness of God's protecting favour: "Their sheep bring forth thousands and ten thousands in their streets, their oxen are strong to labour, and there is no complaining" (Ps. cxliv. 13). Happy are the people that are in such a

case! happy are the very cattle which belong to them and serve them.

The Egyptians venerated a great variety of animals; but oxen were among their chief deities. Herodotus says—"The Egyptians esteem bulls as sacred to Epaphus; the females are sacred to Isis; they venerate cows far beyond all other cattle" (l. 2, c. 38, 41). "The god Apis or Epaphus is the calf of a cow which can have no more young. The Egyp-



Priest offering incense to the Bull Apis. From a procession.

tians say that on this occasion the cow is struck with lightning, in consequence of which she conceives and brings forth Apis: the young one so produced and thus named is known by certain marks; the skin is black, but on the forehead is a white star of a triangular form: the tail is divided at the end" (l. 3, c. 28). It was pretended, moreover, that the tail of this animal increased or diminished in sympathy with the changes of the moon.

The same historian gives the following account of an image of one of these animals, and of the idola-

trous worship paid to it, which he had seen with his own eyes:—"Mycerinus, the son of Cheops, having lost his only daughter, and wishing to honour her funeral with more than ordinary splendour, enclosed her body in a heifer made of wood and richly ornamented with gold. The heifer was not buried; it remained even to my time in the palace of Sais, placed in a superb hall. Every day costly aromatics were burned before it, and every night it was splendidly illuminated. The body of this heifer is covered with a purple cloth, whilst the head and neck are very richly gilt: betwixt the horns there is a golden star" (l. 2, c. 129).

Diodorus tells us—"The priests of Egypt hold bulls in great veneration, and renew their mourning for Osiris over the graves of those beasts" (l. 1, c. 21).

Strabo describes the temple of the ox Apis at Memphis, where he says "he is held to be a god. In front of the sanctuary is a court in which there is another sanctuary for the dam of Apis: into this court Apis is let loose at times for the purpose of exhibiting him to strangers. He is seen through a door in the sanctuary, and he is permitted to be seen also out of it. After he has frisked about a little in the court, he is taken back to his own stall" (l. 17, c. 1). "At Heliopolis is a temple of the sun, and the ox Mnevis, which is kept in a sanctuary, and is regarded by the inhabitants as a god, as Apis is regarded by the people of Memphis" (*ibid.*) "An ox is also kept for worship at Hermonthis" (*ibid.*) "The people of Momemphis worship Venus, and a

sacred cow^a is kept there, as Apis is maintained at Memphis, and Mnevis at Heliopolis: these animals are regarded as gods, but there are other places, and these are numerous, both in the Delta and beyond it, in which a bull or cow is maintained, which are not regarded as gods, but only as sacred" (*ibid.*) According to Ælian, the ox Mnevis was sacred to the sun, and Apis to the moon (de Nat. Anim. l. 2, 11).

Plutarch says—"The ox Mnevis is nourished at Heliopolis at the common expense of the city. He is consecrated to Osiris, and is said by some to be the sire of Apis" (de Isid. et Osirid. c. 33). Porphyry says—"The Egyptians and Phœnicians would rather feed on human flesh than the flesh of a heifer" (de Abstin. ii. 11). When Cambyses was at Memphis the god Apis was conducted to his presence with much ceremony by the priests, the Egyptians following him, clothed in their richest apparel and making great rejoicings. Cambyses, indignant at their folly, inflicted a mortal wound upon the beast with his dagger; "then turning to the priests, 'Wretches,' he exclaimed, 'think ye that gods are formed of flesh and blood, and thus susceptible of wounds? This is indeed a deity worthy of the Egyptians'" (Herodotus, l. 3, c. 27). The Egyptians had many such deities—"The inhabitants of Sais and Thebes worshipped a sheep, those of the city of Ammon a ram, and the Mendesians a goat" (Strabo, 17, 1). Numerous mummies of sheep have been found in the tombs at Thebes. The ass



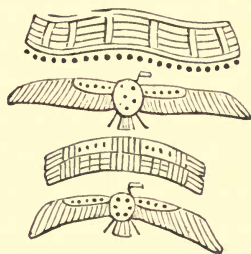
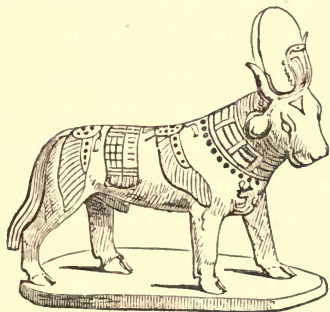
The Cow of Athor.

was also sacred ; and there is reason to believe that the camel was not without some share of divine honours.

The very grievous murrain which now fell upon all the cattle of the Egyptians was another and more direct blow at the monstrous idolatries of that benighted people. By the former plagues their religious ceremonies had been interrupted and their sacred abominations defiled ; but now their chief deities are attacked. In Goshen, where the cattle are but cattle, they remain untouched : “ Of the cattle of the children of Israel there died not one ” (Exod. ix. 6) ; but in all other parts of the country, where they are revered as gods, the plague is upon them, and they die. Osiris, the saviour, cannot save even the brute in which his own soul is supposed to dwell ; Apis and Mnevis, the ram of Ammon, the sheep of Sais, and the goat of Mendes, perish together. Hence Moses reminds the Israelites afterwards, “ Upon their gods also the LORD executed judgments ” (Num. xxxiii. 4) ; and Jethro, when he had heard from Moses the history of all that God had done in Egypt, confessed, “ Now, I know that the LORD is greater than all gods ; for in the thing wherein they dealt proudly, he was above them ” (Exod. xviii. 11). It appears wonderful that, notwithstanding these judgments, by which even the heathen were convinced, the Israelites themselves should have been unpersuaded. It was natural that while they were in Egypt they should join in the idolatries of their masters ; that they did so is evident from the language of Joshua, bidding their

descendants "put away the gods which their fathers served in Egypt" (Josh. xxiv. 14); but it was not to be expected that they would cleave to these abominations after the Lord had brought them out of the house of bondage, and had commanded them to serve him. Yet, in the wilderness, those same idols of Egypt which had perished under God's hand were preferred before the LORD of Lords. "Make us gods which shall go before us" (Exod. xxxii.), was the cry of Israel; and Aaron made them a calf, a molten calf, an image of the sacred bull which was dead; "and he said, These be thy gods, O Israel."

That this calf was a representative of the Egyptian ox may be inferred from the description given of



The Bull Apis, and marks on his back.

it, and of the ceremonies with which it was worshipped. Aaron, it is said, took the golden earrings, "and fashioned it with a graving tool after he had made it a molten calf." Such fashioning they had observed upon the statues of Apis, in the form of sculptured wings and feathers, with ornaments of gold upon the

neck and forehead as already described. "The people rose up early on the morrow, and offered burnt-offerings, and brought peace-offerings : and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play." Joshua "heard the noise of the people as they shouted ; and he said, It is not the voice of them that shout for the mastery, neither is it the voice of them that cry for being overcome ; but the noise of them that sing do I hear. And it came to pass, as soon as he came nigh unto the camp, that he saw the calf and the dancing : and Moses saw that the people were naked, for Aaron had made them naked unto their shame among their enemies." Such shouting and singing, such playing and dancing, such nakedness and wantoning, they had witnessed at the feasts of Mnevis. But they were now not in Egypt, the land of sorcery and idols, but in Horeb the mount of God. This was the place where Jehovah had declared himself to Moses in the burning bush ; this the spot where he had bidden him "Draw not nigh hither ; put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." Here, where God had come down in answer to their cries and tears, they turned away from him, and set up their molten image ; "they changed their glory into the similitude of an ox that eateth grass" (Psalm cvi. 20) ; and they whom God had brought hither by a mighty hand and by a stretched-out arm, that they might sacrifice the abomination of the Egyptians upon his altar, instead of sacrificing it, adored. Truly saith the Psalmist—
"They that make such things are like unto them, and

so is every one that trusteth in them" (Psalm cxv. 8). So foolish are they and ignorant, even as the beasts. But God's mercy is even more amazing than man's folly. As he had plagued Pharaoh, so in the wilderness he "plagued the people because of the calf which Aaron made;" but he had compassion at the same time upon their ignorance; he did not destroy them. "The Lord repented of the evil which he had thought to do unto them" (Exod. xxxii. 14) before they had repented of their sin; and he consumed them not.

There are some traces of this calf-worship to be observed even in our own days. The Hindus still pay reverence to the ox as a sacred animal. One particular kind of cattle, having a hump upon the shoulders, is consecrated to Siva, as the Egyptian bull was to Osiris; they are caressed and pampered by the people; they roam at large, and may destroy the most valuable crops with impunity; none dare lay hands upon them; they are everywhere treated with respect.

In modern times murrain is a not unfrequent visitation in Egypt; but the disease in Pharaoh's day was different from every other, as well in the extent, as in the suddenness and swiftness of its effects. In one day all the cattle of Egypt, which had before been healthy and vigorous, died. This disease was not confined, as murrain usually is, to one species of animal; it destroyed alike the oxen and the sheep, the horses, the asses, and the camels: thus their beasts of burden, and the only animals they had for loco-

tion, were cut off. Camels were not common in Egypt in those days, but the few which had been imported, most probably for Pharaoh's use, shared the common destruction. The miracle was rendered more manifest by the distinction which was made between the cattle of Egypt and those of Israel. No human care, no form of quarantine, even if there had been time for such precautions, could have stopped the path of a pestilence like this : there is no parallel to it in the history of disease or climate ; nor could there be a doubt that God had sent this plague, not in the way of any ordinary calamity, but as a mark of his special displeasure, a stroke from his own hand.

But it had no effect upon Pharaoh. He sent to inquire in the land of Goshen ; and when he heard that the cattle of Israel were safe, anger seems to have prevailed over every other feeling, and, instead of being warned by the judgment, he was hardened.

CHAPTER IX.

BOILS AND BLAINS UPON MAN AND BEAST.

Increasing Severity of the Plagues—Ashes of the Furnace—Retributive Meaning of this Sign—Human Sacrifices—Gods of Healing—Physicians of Egypt—Variety and Number of the Sacred Animals—Judgment executed against all the Gods of Egypt.

THE plagues with which Egypt was afflicted begin from this point to assume a new and more serious character. Hitherto they had been grievous, rather on account of the annoyance and inconvenience which they caused, than from any personal affliction threatening or affecting life. The river turned to blood was an awful portent, and the cause of great distress, which was, however, but of short duration: the frogs, lice, and flies were humiliating, disgusting, and tormenting: the destruction of the cattle was a severe blow both to the people and their gods. Pharaoh, however, is unmoved by all these visitations; his heart is still hardened. God, therefore, now presses upon him more heavily. Since the degradation of their gods and the death of their cattle does not affect them, the pestilence is now sent upon their own bodies. "There shall be boils and blains both upon man and beast throughout all the land of Egypt" (Exod. ix. 10).

This sixth plague is ushered in with a peculiar

ceremony. Moses appears before Pharaoh bearing a censer in his hand filled with ashes from the furnace. He has no message for him now, and gives him no warning of the impending disaster. The sorcerers and priests, the officers and servants, stand round about, anxiously watching what this new sign may mean. None dare to lift up hand against him. The king, whose word was law, who might have doomed him to instant death, is speechless. Moses fears him not, strong in the protection of his unseen God. The idols stare upon the assembled multitude from the sculptured walls ; but neither god nor man of the Egyptians can move hand or foot against the servant of the Lord. He swings the censer, and the ashes fly up towards heaven : the winds take hold of them and carry them in all directions, scattering them far and wide. The small dust descends upon the persons of all present ; it is spread through the courts and chambers of the king's house ; it is borne upon the wings of the wind through all the land of Egypt ; and wherever it falls it burns : like sparks from a furnace it stings and blisters every place it touches ; boils and blains spring forth under it ; the magicians cannot stand before Moses because of the boils, for the boil is upon the magicians, and upon all the Egyptians : hitherto they had withstood him, but now they sink down in his presence, overcome with pain and sickness. Jannes and Jambres shall no more oppose the messengers of God ; "they shall proceed no further, for their folly shall be manifest to all men" (2 Tim. iii. 9).

The censer filled with ashes was an instrument well calculated to remind the Egyptians of those sins for which God was now exacting retribution. They had compelled the Israelites to labour in the brick-kilns; they had made their lives bitter with hard bondage in the heat of the furnace. Moses reminds the Jews how God brought them forth "out of the iron furnace, out of Egypt" (Deut. iv. 20). These ashes of the furnace were now taken from the oppressed and cast upon the oppressors. The burns and smartings of the bondsmen were inflicted upon their masters; and their violent dealing returned thus upon their own pate. The ceremony was descriptive also of a cruel and abominable rite which had once been common in Egypt. Plutarch, quoting from



Seal of the Priests, signifying that the Victim may be slaughtered.

Manetho, relates that "in the city of Idithya it was the custom to burn men alive. They called the victims Typhonii, and their ashes, when they had reduced them to powder, they scattered abroad till they had entirely disappeared" (de Isid. et Osirid. c. 73). These victims were not selected from among their own countrymen, but from strangers and captives. Although human sacrifices had long been abolished at the time of the Exodus, yet it is probable that some part of the rite may have been retained. It is

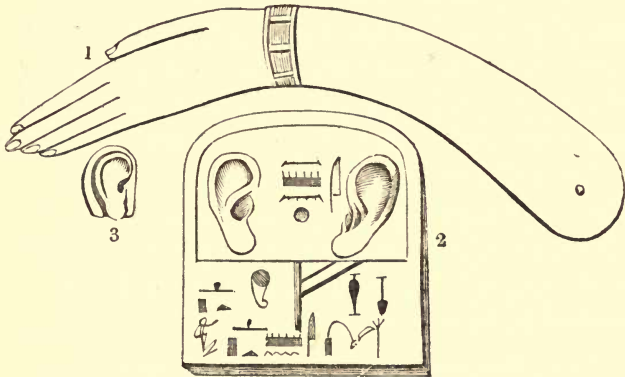
remarkable that the seal of the priests, by which a victim of whatever kind was certified as proper for the sacrifice, and which was in fact the warrant for his slaughter, represents a human being upon his knees, bound, and with a knife presented to his throat. The children of the Israelites had been cast into the water if not into the fire; and it is not improbable that the manner of their death was chosen with a view to confer honour upon the sacred river, as by a sacrifice.

The dust of the Typhonii, when scattered to the winds, was supposed to carry with it the blessings of the gods to whom the human sacrifices had been offered. The act of Moses was therefore in marked antagonism to this custom of the idolators. The ashes which he scattered bore with them a curse instead of a blessing; and the event must have displayed, both to Jew and Gentile, the power and justice of that God who thus avenged his people.

History tells us that the Egyptians had many deities, whose especial office it was to preside over medicine, and to whom the people looked for relief under all maladies and pains of the flesh. According to Diodorus, "The goddess Isis used to reveal herself to people in their sleep when they laboured under any disorder, and to afford them relief. Many who placed their confidence in her influence were wonderfully restored. Many, likewise, who had been given over by the physicians on account of the stubbornness of their distemper, were restored by this goddess. Numbers who had been deprived of their

eyes, and other organs of their bodies, recovered them by their application to Isis." "Orus, the last of the gods who reigned in Egypt, is reported to have learnt the science of physic, as well as prophecy, from his mother Isis" (l. I, c. 25).

The cure of diseases was also attributed by the Egyptians to Exvotos offered in the temples. They consisted of various kinds. Some persons promised a certain sum for the maintenance of the sacred ani-



Exvotos.

1. Ivory hand, in Mr. Salt's Collection. 2. Stone tablet, dedicated to Amunre, for the recovery of a complaint in the ear; found at Thebes. 3. An ear of terra cotta, from Thebes.

mals, or whatever might propitiate the deity; and after the cure had been effected they frequently suspended a model of the restored part in the temple, and ears, eyes, distorted arms, and other members, were dedicated as memorials of their gratitude and superstition" (Wilkinson's Ancient Egyptians). The same custom prevailed among the Greeks and Ro-

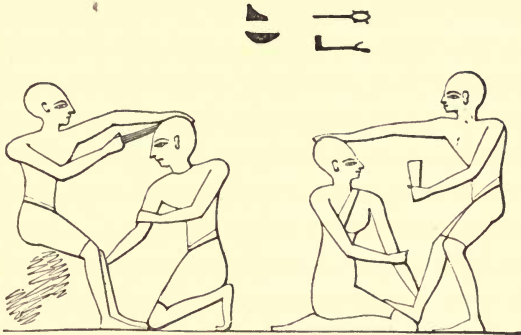
mans ; and in many of the churches of Italy similar objects may even now be seen dedicated to the Virgin, or to some particular saint to whom the cure is attributed.

The Egyptians professed to be able to foretell what epidemics or other disasters were about to happen. Diodorus says, again, "The Egyptian priests foretell both famine and plenty, grievous diseases likely to seize upon man and beast, earthquakes and inundations ; and, through long experience, they are able to predict with such accuracy as would be thought impossible for the wisdom of man to attain to" (l. 1, c. 81). With all their wisdom they could not foretell the murrain upon the cattle, nor the boils and blains upon man and beast, nor any other of the plagues. The physicians of Egypt were celebrated in all neighbouring countries. Homer speaks of Helen's skill in medicine, which she had acquired in Egypt—

" These drugs, so friendly to the joys of life,
Bright Helen learnt from Thone's imperial wife,
Who swayed the sceptre where prolific Nile
With various simples clothes the fatten'd soil."

Odyssey 4, 227.

Herodotus writes :—"The art of medicine in Egypt is thus exercised. One physician is confined to the study and management of one disease : there are, of course, a great number who study this art ; some attend to the diseases of the eyes, others to those of the head ; some take care of the teeth, others are conversant with all diseases of the bowels" (l. 2, c. 84).



Physicians and Patients (or Barbers).

Tacitus presents us with a confused account of this particular plague, mixing up truth with fiction, and attributing to the deities of Egypt a part in the exodus of the Jews which belonged to one who is above all gods. He says—"Many writers concur in the following account: that when Egypt was overrun by a pestilent disease, contaminating living bodies, and very foul to behold, Bocchoris, the king, applying for a remedy to the oracle of Jupiter Hammon, was ordered to purge his kingdom, and to remove into another country, that generation of men (the Jews) so detested by the deities" (Hist., 1, 5, c. 3).

Pharaoh may, like Asa in later times, have sought unto the physicians instead of seeking unto the Lord; but with all their wisdom and experience they could do nothing for him. They were but "forgers of lies, physicians of no value:" their gods of healing and all their Heaven-sent remedies were useless: the people who trusted in the multitude of their deities and doctors were all tortured with the burning plague. As

it is said in Revelation—"There fell a noisome and grievous sore upon the men which had the mark of the beast, and upon them which worshipped his image" (Rev. xvi. 2). This sore was known in after times as "the botch of Egypt" (Deut. xxviii. 27). It was different from all other sores, both in its origin and in its course; and different from all other epidemics, inasmuch as it stopped short upon the frontier of the land of Goshen. It spared also the person of the Jew, though he might have his dwelling in the midst of it, in the cities of the Egyptians; wherever a child of Israel appeared the small dust was either wafted aside or fell upon his flesh harmless.

While the Israelites were thus protected, even the beasts among the Egyptians were partakers of their plague. The ox and the cow, the ram and the goat, had suffered already under the very grievous murrain; but a vast number of other animals were also held in idolatrous reverence, and these were now smitten. "The number of beasts in Egypt," says Herodotus, "is comparatively small, but all of them, both those which are wild and those which are domestic are regarded as sacred. Their laws compel them to cherish animals: a certain number of their men and women are appointed to this office, which is esteemed so honourable that it descends from father to son. In the presence of these animals the inhabitants of the cities perform their vows. It is a capital offence designedly to kill any one of them. In whatever family a cat by accident happens to die, every individual cuts off his eyebrows; but on the death of a dog they

shave their heads and every part of their bodies" (l. 2, c. 65).

Diodorus writes thus:—"The adoration and worshipping of beasts among the Egyptians seems to many, and with reason, a strange and an unaccountable thing; for they worship some creatures most extravagantly when they are dead as well as when they are alive, as cats, ichneumons, dogs, kites, the ibis, wolves, and crocodiles, and many other such like." "He that wilfully kills any of the sacred beasts of Egypt is put to death; but if any kill a cat or the bird Ibis, whether intentionally or not, he is dragged away to death by the multitude without any formal trial or judgment. So great is the superstition of these people, that when the Romans were about making a league with Ptolemy, and all the people were anxious to show the greatest kindness and favour to the Latin nation, and to avoid everything that might give offence to them, yet when a Roman soldier had chanced inadvertently to kill a cat, the people ran in a tumult to seize him, nor could the fear of the Romans, nor the persuasions of the princes who were sent to them from the king, deliver the soldier from the fury of the populace. Of this I was an eye-witness at the time of my travels into Egypt" (l. 1, c. 83).

Strabo gives the following account of this absurd brute reverence:—"The Egyptians worship in common sacred animals; three among the land animals—the ox, the dog, and the cat. The people of Lycopolis worship a wolf; those of Hermopolis the cynocephalus; those of Babylon a cephus, which has the countenance of a satyr, and is, in other respects, between a dog and

a bear ; it is bred in Ethiopia. The inhabitants of Theba worship an eagle ; the Leontopolitæ a lion ; the Mendesians a goat ; the Arthribitæ a shrew-mouse" (l. 17, c. 1).

Lucian thus amuses himself at the expense of this infatuated people—"In Egypt the temple itself is found to be beautiful and of ample dimensions, built with choice stones and ornamented with gilded hieroglyphics ; but if you pry within, to find out the god, you meet with a monkey or a crane, or else a goat or a cat" (Imagines, c. 11). Again "You Egyptian dog's face with the linen wrapper about you, who are you ? And how come you to think you may bark among the gods ? And what means that piod bull of Memphis there, by the genuflexions he receives, by the oracles he delivers, and the prophets he keeps in his pay ? I should blush to mention the storks, and the apes, and the goats, and the other still more preposterous deities of Egypt" (Deor. Concil., c. x).

All these "preposterous deities" were involved in the calamity which now fell upon their land ; the plague of boils and blains lighted upon them in common with their worshippers ; the physicians of Egypt could do nothing, and the gods of Egypt were equally helpless. "According to the number of their cities are their gods" (Jer. xi. 13) ; but have any of them delivered his land ? Instead of saving others, they are themselves cut off. Yet Pharaoh knows not yet that Egypt is destroyed. He still exalts himself against the God of Israel, and will not let his people go that they may serve him.

CHAPTER X.

THE PLAGUE OF RAIN, HAIL, AND FIRE.

The Plagues upon Pharaoh's Heart—The Hail, Rain, and Fire—Fire Worshipped—Fondness of the Egyptians for Trees and Flowers—Fruits of Egypt—Sacred Plants and Vegetables—Sycomore Trees imported—The Flax of Egypt—Spinning and Weaving—Pharaoh's Submission.

IT has been seen that notwithstanding the severity of the fifth and sixth plagues, they produced no effect upon the stubborn will of Pharaoh. He did not yield for a moment to the demand of Moses. He did not humble himself so much as even to entreat that they might be removed. Plague followed, therefore, upon plague; judgment upon judgment; yet not without sufficient warning, not without opportunity afforded to escape the evil. God now sends Moses to the king with a message of strange and terrible significance—"I will at this time send all my plagues upon thy heart" (Exod. ix. 14). The plagues which had befallen hitherto were upon the creatures of Egypt, upon the land and water, upon the sheep and oxen, upon the bodies of the people, and there only skin-deep. But now "all God's plagues" are threatened, and these upon the heart of Pharaoh, and upon his servants, and upon his people.

It may be well to consider here what was the particular sin which brought this dreadful judgment

upon Egypt. It was not idolatry, though that was abominable and excessive. God did not send Moses and Aaron to Pharaoh with the command to put away his paltry deities, and to cast his idols to the moles and to the bats. He did not require of the Egyptians that they should worship Him or do Him service. He would take no bullock out of their house, nor he-goat out of their flocks. The great offence which called for so great a punishment was this: that Pharaoh, king of Egypt, stood between the God of Israel and his people; that he forbade the sacrifice and service which their Lord required of them, and which they were willing to render. "Israel is my son, my first-born" (Exod. iv. 22), was the message of God to Pharaoh; "Let my son go, that he may serve me: and if thou refuse to let him go, behold, I will slay thy son, even thy first-born." Pharaoh, whose official designation was Si Ra, the son of the god Ra, would understand the force of this manner of speech. In numberless inscriptions on the monuments the Pharaohs are styled "own sons," or "beloved sons," of the deity. God now calls Israel by a similar name—"Israel is my son, my first-born." Before Pharaoh was a king, before Egypt was a nation, God had established his covenant with Abraham, and had said: "I will be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee, and I will be their God" (Gen. xvii. 7, 8). And Pharaoh, the creature of a day, now exalts himself against this divine appointment, and lays his cruel hand upon the people of God's choice, and says they shall not serve him.

The words of our Saviour to his disciples seem to find application and example here. "Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!" (Mat. xviii. 7). "Whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believeth in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned" (as Pharaoh and his host were drowned) "in the depths of the sea" (xviii. 6).

While this spiritual judgment is pronounced upon the heart of the king, the outward and physical judgments do not cease. The Lord will wrest from Pharaoh that obedience which he will not yield of his own accord. "As yet exaltest thou thyself against my people? Behold, to-morrow about this time, I will cause it to rain a very grievous hail, such as hath not been in Egypt since the foundation thereof, even until now" (Exod. ix. 17).

This, although the seventh in order of the plagues of Egypt, and the beginning of the third and last series, is the first, so far as we are informed, that struck at the life of any human being; and now there is a merciful exception made, not of the Israelites alone, but of all who should believe the message. God makes a way of escape for those who choose to seek it. "Send, therefore, now," He says to Pharaoh, "and gather thy cattle and all that thou hast in the field; for upon every man and beast which shall be found in the field, and shall not be brought home, the hail shall come down upon them, and they shall die."

Moses, having pronounced this solemn warning, now goes forth into the fields, and stretches out his hand toward heaven ; and the windows of heaven are opened, and the wrath of God pours down. That firmament which had rained water upon the old world, and fire upon Sodom, now sends forth both fire and water upon the land of Egypt. "Fire and hail," saith the Psalmist, "fulfil God's word" (Ps. cxlviii. 8). God himself speaks of "the treasures of hail" (Job xxxviii. 22), as his weapons which he has reserved for the time of trouble, for the day of battle and war. "The hail smote throughout all the land of Egypt, all that was in the field, both man and beast ; and the hail smote every herb of the field, and brake every tree of the field." "He gave them hail for rain, and flaming fire in the land" (Ps. cv. 32). "He destroyed their vines with hail, and their sycomore-trees with frost" (Ps. lxxviii. 47). He gave up their cattle also to the hail, and their flocks to hot thunderbolts : he smote their vines also, and their fig trees, and brake the trees in their coasts." "The LORD also thundered in the heavens, and the Highest gave his voice ; hailstones and coals of fire" (Ps. xviii. 13).

A plague of hail, with lightning and thunder, must have been far more awful and portentous in Egypt than in any other country ; for there rain was almost unknown, thunderstorms were of rare occurrence, and lightning, when it appeared, was generally of a harmless kind. Modern travellers, indeed, speak of snowstorms, and of thunder and lightning happening occasionally in lower Egypt ; but such phenomena

appear to have been almost unknown in earlier times. Herodotus says—"During the reign of Psammenitus, Egypt beheld a most remarkable prodigy. There was rain at the Egyptian Thebes, a circumstance which never happened before, and which, as the Thebans themselves assert, has never occurred since. In the higher parts of Egypt it never rains; but at that period it rained in distinct drops" (l. 3, c. 10). Plutarch also observes that "In Egypt no moisture of the air is ever condensed into showers" (*de facie*, c. 25). Pococke mentions a storm of hail followed by rain in the province of Arsinoe, which "the natives were so far from considering as a blessing, that they observed rain was productive of scarcity, and that the inundation of the Nile alone was serviceable."

The Egyptians were much given to the observance of all unusual phenomena, and looked upon them as portentous. According to Herodotus, "Whenever any unusual circumstance occurs they commit the particulars of it to writing, and mark the events which follow" (l. 2, c. 38). If "distinct drops of rain" were regarded as a prodigy worthy of being thus recorded, what must have been the effect of a storm like this, when the hail fell with sufficient violence to destroy both man and beast, and the fire also ran along the ground.

"The Egyptians," says Diodorus, "denominated fire Hephaistos, esteeming it a mighty deity, which contributed largely towards the generation and ultimate perfection of beings" (l. I, c. I). According to Lucian, "The Persians sacrifice to fire and the Egyptians

to water" (de Jove trag. c. 24). Porphyry says—"Even to this day, at the opening of the temple of Serapis, the worship is made by fire and water, for they reverence water and fire above all the elements." These deities now came down upon Egypt with destruction and terror; the very gods in which they trusted turned against them.

"The hail," we are told, "smote every herb of the field, and brake every tree of the field." The Egyptians bestowed great care upon their gardens, which were tastefully laid out, and planted with ornamental



Flowers presented to Guests.

and fruit-bearing trees and shrubs, and watered by engines and artificial rivulets. They were also very fond of flowers; no people (says Wilkinson) appear to have made so much use of flowers on every occasion. "Every visitor received a bouquet of real flowers as a token of welcome on entering a house: it was the pipe and coffee of the modern Egyptians; and

a guest at a party was not only presented with a lotus or some other flower, but had a chaplet placed round his head and another round his neck, which led the Roman poet to remark the ‘many chaplets on the foreheads’ of the Egyptians at their banquets: everywhere flowers abounded; they were formed into wreaths and festoons, and crowned the wine bowl, as well as the servants who bore the cup from it to the assembled guests.” Flowers and fruits also were presented upon the altars of the gods, the former in bouquets or chaplets, the latter in baskets or trays. Among the fruits of Egypt were the date, grape, pomegranate, olive, fig, and various kinds of melons; their vegetables also were of great variety and excellence, and formed a considerable portion of their diet, animal food being very sparingly used.

Gardens and fields, trees and herbs, were now alike destroyed, and the superstitions of the country met with a fresh reproof; for the Egyptians, incredible as it may seem, not content with making to themselves gods of the elements and of living animals, revered the produce of the soil as sacred. “Garlic and onions,” says Pliny, “are invoked by the Egyptians when taking an oath, in the number of their deities” (Nat. Hist. 19, 32).

“ ’Tis dangerous here

To violate an onion, or to stain

The sanctity of leeks with tooth profane!

O holy nation! sacro-sanct abodes!

Where every garden propagates its gods!”

Such is the sarcastic exclamation of the Roman poet, Juvenal (Sat. 15, v. 9).

Onions are often represented in the sculptures of Egypt tied up in a peculiar form for presentation on the altar of the gods. The papyrus and the lotus, the peach and the sycamore fig, the tamarisk and ivy, with some other herbs and fruits, were also objects of reverence. In hieroglyphics one of the most ancient names of Egypt is "The land of the sycamore." Saneha, that is "Son of the sycamore," is found as the name of a Court favourite under the twelfth dy-



Onions tied up for offerings.

nasty. These trees were greatly prized for the shade afforded by their widespreading branches; they were sacred to Nepte, as the tamarisk was to Osiris, and the perseia to Athor. The sycamore is especially mentioned as having suffered under the plague of hail, and it is remarkable that the widow of Thotmes, who is supposed to have been the Pharaoh of the Exodus, after her husband's overthrow, imported a great number of these trees from Arabia Felix (Speaker's Com-

mentary). The goddesses Athor and Nepte are represented in the sculptures in their respective trees, the perseæ and sycomore fig, presenting their fruits as the ambrosia and nectar of Heaven, to those who were judged worthy of admission to the regions of eternal happiness. Monkeys, also, which were sacred animals, are shown gathering the sycomore figs. These sacred trees were now beaten down by the

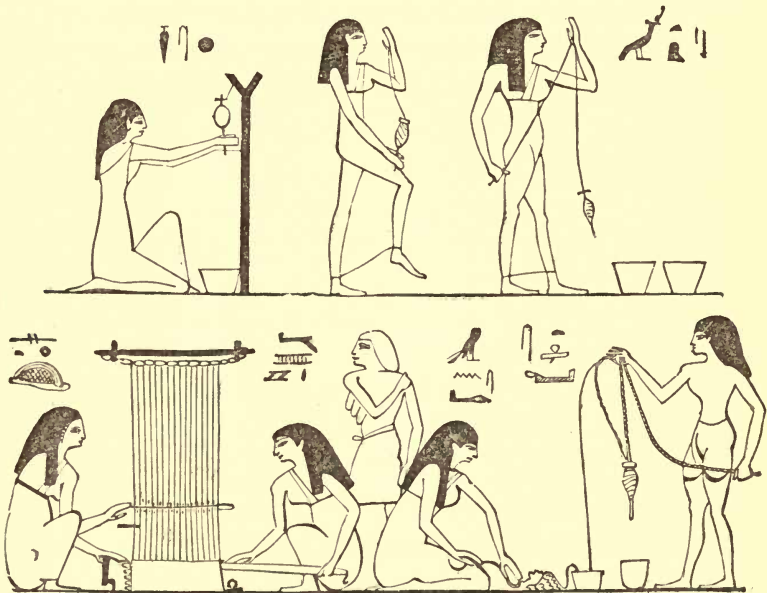


Monkeys gathering Figs.

hail, and withered by the fire; and in the plague that followed all that remained of them was eaten by the locusts. Those who revered them could hardly fail to recognise in this, as well as in the other visitations the Divine intention and reproof.

“The flax and the barley was smitten; for the barley was in the ear, and the flax was balled.” The mention of these productions enables us to ascertain the time of year when this great storm took place—viz. about the beginning of March; and hence we are

able to infer the probable seasons and duration of the other plagues (see Chap. III.) The destruction of the flax and barley was a terrible blow to the wealth and commerce of the country. Egypt had always been famous for her fine linen. In later times "Solomon had horses brought out of Egypt, and linen and yarn ;



Spinning and Weaving Flax.

the king's merchants received the linen yarn at a price" (1 Kings x. 28). The wanton woman in the Proverbs says, "I have decked my bed with coverings of tapestry, with carved work, with the fine linen of Egypt" (Prov. vii. 16). "Fine linen, with brodered work from Egypt" (Ezek. xxvii. 7) was that which Tyrus spread

forth to be her sail ; and Isaiah, in his denunciations of that country, says, " They that work in fine flax, and they that weave networks, shall be confounded " (Is. xix. 9).

Herodotus says—" The manufacture of linen is peculiar to the Colchians and the Egyptians. The linen which comes from Colchis, the Greeks call Sardonian ; the linen of Egypt, Egyptian " (l. 2, c. 105). Pliny's account of it is—" The flax of Egypt, though the least strong of all as a tissue, is that from which the greatest profits are derived. There is no tissue known that is superior to those made from the thread of the Egyptian xylon, either for whiteness and softness, or dressing ; the most esteemed vestments worn by the priests of Egypt are made of it " (Hist. Nat. l. 19, c. 2). Pliny mentions four varieties of flax, and first among them the Tanaitic, growing in the lower district of Egypt, Zoan, which was the seat of Pharaoh's government. The destruction of the flax deprived the people of the material for their chief manufacture, and put a stop to the trade which they carried on with neighbouring nations, who sent their treasure into the country to pay for it. The ruin of the barley was equally injurious. Egypt appears to have been from a very early period the granary of the world. Thither Abraham went down to sojourn when the land in which he dwelt was visited with famine ; and thither the sons of Jacob, under a similar necessity, naturally turned for help,— " And all countries came into Egypt to Joseph for to buy corn ; because that the famine was so sore in all lands " (Gen.

xli. 57). No country was so fertile as Egypt ; none yielded such enormous crops of corn. When, therefore, the flax and the barley were smitten, it was no ordinary loss that fell upon the people, but a double famine, such as they had never before experienced ; a famine, of the material by which the people were accustomed to earn their living, and a famine of the bread on which they must subsist.

The effect of this great desolation upon Pharaoh was remarkable. The people had already shown some signs of yielding ; for there were some "among the servants of Pharaoh who feared the word of the LORD" (Exod. ix. 20), and had made their cattle flee betimes into the houses ; and now the king himself is humbled. He sends for Moses and Aaron, and not only prays that the plague may cease, but confesses his fault before them. "I have sinned this time : the LORD is righteous, and I and my people are wicked. Entreat the LORD, for it is enough, that there be no more mighty thunderings and hail ; and I will let you go, and ye shall stay no longer" (ix 27). It was another lying subterfuge, and Moses knew it ; nevertheless he yielded to his prayer. "As soon as I am gone out of the city, he said, I will spread abroad my hands unto the LORD, and the thunder shall cease, neither shall there be any more hail, that thou mayest know that the earth is the LORD'S ; but as for thee and thy servants, I know that ye will not yet fear the LORD."

And so this man of God went forth into the field, walking without fear through the storm and tempest,

by which all other living things were beaten down : he went through fire and through water, amid ruin and desolation, with the dying and the dead of man and beast around him ; he walked where the crashing hail fell down, breaking the mightiest trees to fragments, and where the fire ran along the ground, withering and burning up the herbs ; and wherever he stepped the hail ceased, and the lightning glanced aside. "We will not fear," saith the Psalmist, "though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea : though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof" (Ps. xlv. 2). The Roman poet gives a parallel to this, describing the just man in the midst of dangers—

"Let Jove's dread arm with thunder rend the spheres,
Amid the crash of worlds undaunted he appears."

Horat. l. 3, Carm. 3.

Moses knew that he was safe, though all around might be destroyed ; the very hairs of his head were all numbered ; not one of them could perish. Standing, then, under the tempestuous canopy of heaven, bareheaded, in the attitude of prayer, he "spread abroad his hands unto the LORD ; and the thunder and hail ceased, and the rain was not poured upon the earth."

Thus Moses, like Elias, had power to open and to shut the heavens : and God's two witnesses in the Apocalypse shall have the same (Rev. xi. 6) : but neither Moses nor Elias, nor they who are yet to

come, can turn the stubborn hearts that are in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity: the lesson was thrown away upon Pharaoh: it was intended to convince him that "the earth is the LORD'S," the whole earth, and not only a part of it; "the earth and the fulness thereof, the round world and they that dwell therein" (Ps. xxiv. 1). In Egypt the several districts and cities were supposed to be under the protection and government of so many different deities, which were worshipped under their several emblems—the goat in one place, the ape in another, the cat in a third. Pharaoh and his people had confessed the power of Jehovah as a God, the God of the Jews, the God of Goshen perhaps, one God among many others; but they would not acknowledge him as the God of the universe: the words of Moses were again fulfilled, "I know that ye will not yet fear the LORD God." "When Pharaoh saw that the rain and the hail and thunders were ceased, he sinned yet more, and hardened his heart, he and his servants; neither would he let the children of Israel go, as the Lord had spoken by Moses."

A similar plague to this, yet far more dreadful, is described in the book of Revelation. It is to be poured out upon the apostate Egypt, of which this idolatrous country was a type. "The first angel sounded, and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth; and the third part of trees was burnt up" (Rev. viii. 7). "There fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent: and men blasphemed

God because of the plague of the hail; for the plague thereof was exceeding great" (Rev. xvi. 21). Thus, in God's judgments the history of the past is recorded as a warning for the future: whatever punishments have fallen upon the heathen for their sins will be inflicted with greater severity upon those who, in spite of gospel teaching, continue as the heathen. Egypt of old was destroyed, but the Egypt of Christian times must expect a more dreadful end: Babylon of the Gentiles has perished; but the Babylon of modern infidelity and worldliness shall be rewarded double: "Come out of her, my people," is the cry of God's mighty angel, "that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues:" "God hath remembered her iniquities; in the cup which she hath filled, fill to her double" (Rev. xviii. 4-6). Christians should be careful of their privileges, and mindful of the responsibilities which they entail. Egypt was beaten down with hail, and Sodom burnt with fire; yet it shall be more tolerable in the day of judgment for Egypt and for Sodom than for that people who in these days of better light and knowledge harden their hearts against the LORD, refuse obedience to his will, and hinder others also.

CHAPTER XI.

THE PLAGUE OF LOCUSTS.

Locusts threatened—Alarm of the People—Swarms of locusts described, by Joel, by Pliny, by Orosius—Locust-scaring Deities of the Ancients.

IT has been already observed that the plagues of Egypt, as they succeeded each other, were characterised by gradually increasing severity. The plague of locusts following the grievous visitation of boils and blains upon man and beast, and the yet more fatal and alarming storm of hail and lightning, appears at first sight to be an exception to this order. And yet it is evident that the Egyptians were more alarmed in the prospect of this judgment than by any of those which preceded it. As soon as the warning of Moses was made known to them, Pharaoh's servants came to him and said, "How long shall this man be a snare unto us? Let the men go, that they may serve the LORD their God: knowest thou not yet that Egypt is destroyed? (Exod. x. 7). This was the first time that Pharaoh's servants or officers had ventured to intervene before the infliction of any plague. Pharaoh himself, although his heart was hardened against God, as we are told three times in as many verses, could not but share the common anxiety. Moses had left him abruptly, and without the usual ceremonies of a royal interview, for as soon as he had

delivered, his message, "he turned himself, and went out from Pharaoh:" yet the king sends for him again, and almost yields to his demand—"Go and serve the LORD your God," he says; "but who are ye that shall go?" Moses answers him, "We will go with our young and with our old, with our sons and with our daughters, with our flocks and with our herds, will we go; for we must hold a feast unto the LORD." The



Officers of Pharaoh's Household.

Egyptians honoured their gods in this manner, visiting their shrines in vast numbers, and with all the members of their households; much more must the people of Israel observe a general festival to the LORD. "At the feast of Bubastis," says Herodotus, "the natives report that seven hundred thousand men assemble, not to mention children" (l. 2, c. 60).

But when Pharaoh hears of the departure of all their host, and of their flocks and herds, his insolence once more gets the better of him, and he defies both Moses and his God—"Let the Lord be so with you, as I will let you go, and your little ones" (Exod. x. 10); and they are driven out from Pharaoh's presence.

The very name of locust was terrible to the Egyptians, for they had had frequent experience of the ravages committed by those creatures in former visitations which were not miraculous. In one of the papyri, the locust is mentioned as the common enemy of the husbandman. The accounts of modern travellers enable us to understand the alarm with which an extraordinary plague of this kind must have been expected. "In the present day," says Mr. Poole, "locusts suddenly appear in the cultivated land, coming from the desert in a column of great length. They fly across the country, darkening the air with their compact ranks, which are undisturbed by the constant attacks of kites, crows, and vultures, and making a strange whizzing sound like that of fire, or many distant wheels. Where they alight they devour every green thing, even stripping the trees of their leaves. Rewards are offered for their destruction, but no labour can seriously reduce their numbers. Soon they continue their course, and disappear gradually in a short time, leaving the place where they have been a desert" (Smith's Dictionary of the Bible). Major Moore describes a cloud of locusts extending over 500 miles, and so compact while on the wing, that, like an eclipse, it completely hid the sun.

The prophet Joel, foretelling the invasion of Israel by hordes of merciless Assyrians, compares them for number and destructiveness to locusts.

“A nation is come up upon my land, strong, and without number, whose teeth are the teeth of a lion, and he hath the cheek-teeth of a great lion. He hath laid my vine waste, and barked my fig tree : he hath made it clean bare, and cast it away ; the branches thereof are made white.” “The field is wasted, the land mourneth ; for the corn is wasted : the new wine is dried up, the oil languisheth. Be ye ashamed, O ye husbandmen : howl, O ye vine-dressers, for the wheat and for the barley ; because the harvest of the field is perished. The vine is dried up, and the fig tree languisheth ; the pomegranate tree, the palm tree also, and the apple tree, even all the trees of the field, are withered : because joy is withered away from the sons of men” (Joel i. 6-12). “A day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness, as the morning spread upon the mountains ; a great people and a strong : there hath not been ever the like, neither shall be any more after it, even to the years of many generations. A fire devoureth before them ; and behind them a flame burneth : the land is as the garden of Eden before them, and behind them a desolate wilderness ; yea, and nothing shall escape them” (ii. 2, 3). “Before their face the people shall be much pained : all faces shall gather blackness. They shall run like mighty men ; they shall climb the wall like men of war ; and they shall

march every one on his ways, and they shall not break their ranks" (ii. 6, 7). "The earth shall quake before them; the heavens shall tremble: the sun and the moon shall be dark, and the stars shall withdraw their shining" (ii. 10).

Again, in the book of Nahum, "There shall the fire devour thee; the sword shall cut thee off; it shall eat thee up like the cankerworm: make thyself many as the cankerworm, make thyself many as the locusts." "Thy crowned are as the locusts, and thy captains as the great grasshoppers" (iii. 15-17).

This figurative description of the dreadful enemies which were to come upon Israel is evidently based upon the well-known terror and loss which a visitation of locusts brought with it; their number was such that the sun was hidden as behind a cloud, and their withering effects upon the trees and herbage so terrible as to leave famine and disease behind them wherever they had halted. Their steady flight, and the impossibility of making any defence against them, is well represented by the march of disciplined armies, to which the author of the book of Proverbs also likens them: "The locusts have no king, but they go forth all of them by bands" (Prov. xxx. 27).

The following is from Pliny:—"Swarms of locusts are looked upon as a plague inflicted by the anger of the gods: for as they fly they appear to be larger than they really are, while they make such a loud noise with their wings that they might be readily supposed to be winged creatures of another species. Their numbers, too, are so vast that they quite darken the sun;

they cover vast tracts of country, in clouds, which bode destruction to the harvests. Scorching numerous objects by their very contact, they eat away everything with their teeth, even to the doors of the houses. In Syria people are placed under martial law, and compelled to kill them : in so many countries does this dreadful pest prevail" (Nat. Hist. l. 11, c. 35).

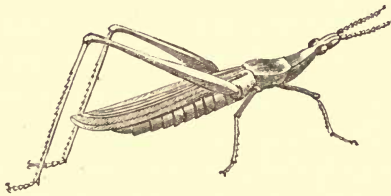
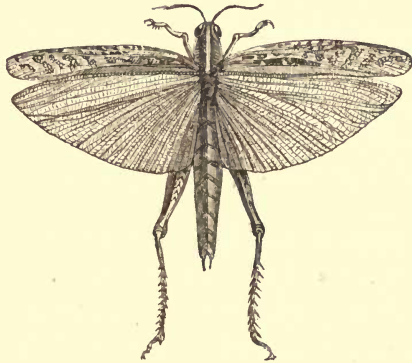
Orosius, a Spanish priest, contemporary with St. Augustine and St. Jerome, who settled in Africa in the early part of the fifth century, gives the following account of a plague of locusts :—"In the consulship of Marcus Plautius Hypsæus and Marcus Fulvius Flaccus" (about the year of Rome 628, and 125 years before the Christian era), "when Africa had scarcely recovered itself from the miseries of the last Punic war, it underwent another desolation, terrible in its effects, and contrary to all experiences. For, after that immense numbers of locusts had formed themselves in a huge body all over the region, and had ruined all hopes of any fruits of the earth ; after they had consumed all the herbage of the field without sparing the roots, and the leaves of the trees with the tendrils upon which they grew, and had gone so far as to penetrate with their teeth through the bark, however bitter, and into the dry and solid timber ; by a sudden blast of wind they were wafted away in different portions, and having for a while been supported in the air, they were ultimately all plunged into the sea. After this, the surf threw up upon that long extended coast such immense heaps of their dead and corrupted bodies that there ensued from their

putrefaction a most unsupportable and poisonous stench. This soon brought on a pestilence, which affected every species of animals, so that all birds, and sheep, and cattle, also the wild beasts of the field, died; and their carcasses being soon rendered putrid by the foulness of the air, added greatly to the general corruption. In respect to men, it is impossible, without horror, to describe the shocking devastation. In Numidia, where at that time Micipsa was king, eighty thousand persons perished. Upon that part of the sea coast which bordered upon the region of Carthage and Utica, the number of those who were carried off by this pestilence is said to have been two hundred thousand" (Contra Paganos Hist. l. 5, c. 11, quoted by Bryant).

Experience of such calamities as are here described may well have excited the most lively terror and anxiety among the Egyptians, especially as they would now anticipate a visitation far more dreadful than even the worst that had previously been known. All the plagues of Moses were of a miraculous character, and the miracle, in the instance now threatened, would consist not so much in the nature of the plague as in its extent and severity.

There were various species of locusts, which are called in the Bible by nine different names; the name in this place signifies "multitudinous:" and it is probable that the visitation consisted of several different varieties. "They shall cover the face of the earth," said Moses, "that one cannot be able to see the earth" (Exod. x. 5). The expression is literally "they shall cover the *eye* of

the earth," in allusion perhaps to the darkness produced by their flight ; it is, however, worthy of remark that the name of Egypt is written in hiero-



Various Locusts.

glyphics with an eye ; and "the eye of the earth" may have applied to this, as signifying that the entire country should be covered, wherever it was called by that name ; or, in reference to the excellence of the

land to be devoured, which the Egyptians regarded with pardonable vanity as the most precious spot, the "eye," of all the world. "They shall eat the residue of that which is escaped, which remaineth unto you



The name of " Egypt."

from the hail, and shall eat every tree which groweth for you out of the field : and they shall fill thy houses and the houses of all thy servants, and the houses of all the Egyptians ; which neither thy fathers, nor thy fathers' fathers have seen, since the day when they were upon the earth unto this day." And accordingly we are told, after the event, "Very grievous were they ; before them were no such locusts, neither after them shall be such."

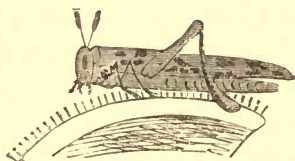
The land which had just before been smitten by the storm of hail and fire, must, by this judgment following so swiftly, have been utterly desolated. The flax and the barley had been already lost ; the wheat and the rye were now also destroyed, this latter being one of the most important cereals among the Egyptians, and the only one which is portrayed upon the sculptures. Every herb of the field had been beaten down and every tree broken ; but these might soon have regained their usual luxuriance ; in that fertile soil, and under those genial influences, the herbage might have recovered itself, and the trees put

forth new buds ; now, however, every green thing was devoured, and the trees stripped of their bark, and there could be no hope of any speedy restoration. At other times the ravages of the locusts had been confined to certain districts ; here and there a tract of country of a few miles' extent might be wasted, and the inhabitants of that particular district reduced to want ; but these locusts covered the whole land of Egypt, and ate up all that the hail had left in every part of it.

The author of the book of Wisdom seems to imply that the locusts of Moses were of a different and more terrible species than those previously known, and that they attacked not only the fruits of the earth but also the persons of men ;—"These the bitings of grasshoppers and flies killed," he says ; "neither was there any remedy for their life" (Wisdom xvi. 9) : and to this the description in the book of Revelation corresponds ;—"There came out of the smoke locusts upon the earth ; and unto them was given power as the scorpions of the earth have power . . . and their teeth were as the teeth of lions, and their power was to hurt men" (Rev. ix. 3). Pharaoh himself acknowledged the miraculous character of this plague, as distinct from all former visitations of the kind, when he sent in haste for Moses and Aaron, and confessed : "I have sinned against the LORD your God, and against you : now therefore forgive, I pray thee, my sin only this once, and entreat the LORD that he may take away from me this death also."

It has been shown already that the Egyptians, in

common with other nations whose ideas of religion were derived originally from Egypt, had particular deities to whom they appealed for help in times of particular necessity. There is reason to believe that they had gods to whom they looked for protection against locusts as well as against flies and vermin. Strabo, speaking of certain gods whose titles were derived from insignificant objects, says: "The inhabitants of Mount Cæta worshipped Hercules under the title of Hercules Cornopion, because he had delivered them from locusts. So the Erythræans, who live near Melius, worship Hercules Ipoctonus, because he destroyed the *ipes* or worms which are destructive to vines; for this pest is found everywhere except in the country of the Erythræans. The Rhodians have in their island a temple of Apollo Erythibius, so called from *erisybe* (mildew), which they call *erythibe*. Among the Æolians in Asia one of their months is called Pornopion, for this name the Bœotians give to *parnopos* (locusts), and sacrifices are performed to Apollo Pornopion" (l. 13, c. 1). The locust was



Locust from the Sculptures.

esteemed sacred in Greece, and the Athenians wore golden cicadæ or grasshoppers in their hair to denote the antiquity of their race, as ἀντιόχοι, "of

the land itself," or aborigines. Early historians tell us that the Greeks came originally from Egypt: Cecrops, the first king of Attica, was from Sais; Cadmus, from Thebes; and Danäus and Lynceus,

with their colonies, from Chemnis. The locust-scarers of Greece and Asia were therefore, in all probability, gods of the Egyptians in the time of Pharaoh, and were put to shame, with the rest of their deities, by this unprecedented and miraculous visitation.

The petition of Pharaoh received an immediate and favourable answer. Moses went out from Pharaoh, and intreated the LORD, and the LORD turned a strong west wind, which took away all the locusts, and cast them into the Red Sea: there remained not one locust in all the coasts of Egypt. The east wind had brought them, and the west wind took them away. By profane historians, also, the coming and going of the locusts is generally ascribed to the action of the wind. "In the spring time," according to Diodorus, "the south winds rise high, and drive an infinite number of locusts out of the desert, of an extraordinary size: these afford plentiful food for the inhabitants of those parts" (l. 3, c. 2). Strabo mentions a people whose food consists of locusts, "which the south-west winds, when they blow violently in the spring time, drive in bodies into the country" (l. 16, c. 4). Pliny thus describes the departure of the locusts: "The winds carry them off in vast swarms, upon which they fall into the sea and standing waters" (l. 11, c. 35). But the removal of this plague was not less miraculous than its infliction: it was sudden and complete; no heaps of the dead insects were left upon the ground; no stores of them remained to be preserved, after the manner of that country, to supply the food of which they must have been sorely in need: they were carried away, "all of

them in bands," as they had arrived : "there remained not one in all the coasts of Egypt" (Exod. x. 19).

Thus the winds from the four corners of heaven obey the command of Jehovah. As far as man is concerned, nothing is more uncertain, nothing more absolutely beyond control ; "the wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh or whether it goeth" (John iii. 8). But God directeth it under the whole heaven : he calleth it "Awake, O north wind, and come thou south" (Cant. iv. 16) ; "He gathereth the wind in his fists" (Prov. xxx. 4) ; "He bringeth it out of his treasuries" (Ps. cxxxv. 7). At God's command the east wind brought the locusts, in twenty-four hours, from the uttermost parts of the east, collecting them, it may be, from the far off deserts of Arabia and Persia ; and at God's command the west wind carried them away again, as far as the Red Sea. There they all fell down and perished. "I am tossed up and down as the locust" (Ps. cix. 23), says David. These creatures were tossed up and down by the winds wherever God would send them. He had used them as his scourge, an instrument of punishment, in which he could have no pleasure ; and when their ungrateful task was done he drowned them in the sea. To those same depths the infatuated king who refused to be warned by the chastisement was presently to follow them, and with his miserable people, in their turn, to perish.

CHAPTER XII.

DARKNESS TO BE FELT.

Darkness to be Felt—Meaning of the Term : Miraculous Character of the Plague—How produced—Evidence from Joel, Zephaniah, Job—the Simoom, etc.—Awful Incidents of this Visitation—The Sun worshipped—Rameses—Potipherah—Darkness revered.

THE locusts are gone, not one of them is left ; as a dark cloud in the heavens they came, and as a cloud they are vanished away ; the shadow which they cast over the land of Egypt has passed, and the bright shining of the sun beams forth again upon the fated land. Pharaoh looks abroad, and sees that there is respite ; he casts away once more his repentance and humility ; his heart again is hardened, and he will not let the children of Israel go.

“ Knowest thou not yet that Egypt is destroyed ? ” was the plea of Pharaoh’s servants before the locusts came. No ; he knew it not ; he would not know it. Even now, with the scene of utter desolation everywhere around him, with the fields scorched and barren, and the naked trees stretching out their white and shattered boughs like ghastly skeletons, with even the walls of his houses and the furniture of his chambers marked by the gnawings of those “ very grievous locusts,” with all these terrible witnesses before his eyes, Pharaoh knew it not.

The course of divine judgment, therefore, again proceeds: almost in the same sentence in which the destruction of the locusts is recorded, the plague of darkness is announced. "And the LORD said unto Moses, stretch out thine hand toward Heaven, that there may be darkness over the land of Egypt, even darkness which may be felt. And Moses stretched forth his hand toward Heaven; and there was a thick darkness in all the land of Egypt three days: they saw not one another, neither rose any from his place for three days; but all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings" (Exod. x. 21).

"Darkness that may be felt." It has been proposed by some learned commentators to render this passage, "They shall grope in darkness;" as if it meant only that they should feel their way before them with their hands, in moving from place to place. This interpretation requires an alteration, though a slight one, in the Hebrew text; but why should one jot or one tittle be changed, when the sense is already sufficiently plain? The marginal reading in the authorised version is "that one may feel darkness;" and this is no doubt the true, as well as the literal meaning of the passage. As if to refute such a rendering as that proposed above, we are told distinctly that there was no groping, for the terror-stricken people sat still, too much oppressed with vague alarms to move; neither rose any from his place so long as the plague continued.

It is impossible to form any decided opinion as to the means by which this palpable darkness was

produced. A miracle is independent of natural causes; for though it may be brought about by means which may be seen and traced, yet there must be a supernatural use of those means, a miraculous bending of them to produce the extraordinary effects; and it is equally a mark of divine power whether the instrument so directed be manifest and appreciable to our senses, or the contrary.

Darkness may have been produced by a deprivation of sight. The sun may have risen and set as usual upon the land, yet the eyes of all the Egyptians being closed and blinded, no ray of light could reach them; this, if it were attended with pain in the organs of vision, might be properly described as "darkness to be felt." The men of Sodom were stricken with blindness for their sin. The great host which came to take Elisha were smitten with blindness. Moses, in Deuteronomy, where he threatens the people with the botch of Egypt, reminding them of the plague of boils and blains, says immediately afterwards, alluding, probably, to this plague, "The LORD shall smite thee with blindness and thou shalt grope at noonday as the blind gropeth in darkness" (xxviii. 27-29). Blindness was the punishment inflicted upon Elymas the sorcerer; and these Egyptians were famous for their sorceries. The darkness may therefore have been of this kind, a painful but temporary loss of eyesight.

It has been suggested again, that the effects here described may have been produced by a violent sand storm, such as are not unfrequent at certain seasons in

the desert. The Simoom makes its appearance at a distance by a dark haze, which, as it approaches, seems to overspread the sky. Fierce gusts of wind follow, bringing with them clouds of red and burning sand in huge columns, which, as they are whirled along, overthrow and destroy everything that happens to lie in their path. "Woe," says Sonnini, describing such a sand storm, which he himself encountered in the month of March 1778, "Woe to those who may then be traversing the immense and dreary sands which form the borders of Egypt. Intrepidity is there of no avail, as the most courageous armies might be overwhelmed with clouds of sand, perish from suffocation, and die in despair." "The atmosphere seemed to be on fire, though darkened by whirlwinds of dust; both men and animals inhaled the scorching vapours mixed with burning sand; the plants were literally parched with the surprising heat, and all animated nature was withered."

Whole caravans and even armies, as above suggested, have been thus overwhelmed. The army of Cambyses, numbering fifty thousand, is said by Herodotus to have perished by a sand storm while on their way through the deserts with the sacrilegious design of pillaging the temple of Jupiter Ammon; and the catastrophe is attributed to the just anger of the deity (l. 3, c. 26). The destruction of Sennacherib's army has been ascribed, with less probability, to a similar agency. These storms do not, it is true, usually last more than a quarter of an hour or twenty minutes, and the darkness is not greater than the gloom of twilight;

but we may conceive that on this occasion both the intensity and duration of the Simoom may have been miraculously increased, so as to produce all the phenomena of the plague of darkness.

There is another burning wind called the Khामaseen, which usually blows for three days and nights continuously, and carries with it so much sand as to produce the appearance of a yellow fog. Either of these visitations, however, if aggravated to such an extent as to cause absolute darkness, would have been rather a miracle of destruction than of punishment, since not only the whole face of the country, but also the inhabitants, must have been buried under the immense volumes of sand.

Darkness, such as is here described, may have been occasioned by a thick cloud resting upon the earth, and pervading all the lower regions of the atmosphere: this would enfold the people so as "to be felt," and would intercept the sun's rays effectually by its density. Something of this kind appears to be described in the book of Ezekiel. The destruction of Egypt by Nebuchadnezzar is there foretold; and the judgments threatened in the future seem to have reference generally to the plagues which had been inflicted in the past. Thus, in the 29th chapter—"I am against thee, Pharaoh king of Egypt, the great dragon that lieth in the midst of his rivers, which hath said, My river is mine own, and I have made it for myself. . . . I will cause the fish of thy rivers to stick unto thy scales. . . . Behold, therefore, I am against thee, and against thy rivers"

(xxix. 3, 4, 10). "I will also water with thy blood the land wherein thou swimmest, even to the mountains; and the rivers shall be full of thee." (xxxii. 6). Again, "I will put a fear in the land of Egypt" (xxx. 13). And again, "I will set fire in Egypt" (xxx. 16). In these passages reference is evidently made to the judgments against the river and the fish deities, to the fire which ran along the ground in the great storm, and to the terror which prevailed during most of the judgments. Then follows in the 32d chapter—"I will cover the heaven, and make the stars thereof dark; I will cover the sun with a cloud, and the moon shall not give her light. All the bright lights of heaven will I make dark over thee, and set darkness upon thy land, saith the LORD God" (xxxii. 7, 8). It is a reasonable conjecture that the figures employed by the prophet, of the sun covered with a cloud, and darkness set upon the land, may be derived from the reality which Egypt had already suffered.

God is often described as manifesting his displeasure in a cloud. Joel speaks of the day of God's vengeance as "a day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness" (Joel ii. 2); and Zephaniah employs nearly the same language (i. 15). The pillar that went before the Israelites, and gave them light, was to the Egyptians "a cloud and darkness" (Exod. xiv. 20). The darkness which was upon the face of the earth "in the beginning," is described by Jehovah in the book of Job as a cloud: "When I made the cloud the garment thereof, and thick dark-

ness a swaddling-band for it" (Job xxxviii. 9). So now the land of Egypt may have been wrapped about by a thick palpable cloud, cold, damp, impenetrable : the people would feel it upon their limbs, as swaddling-bands ; the sun would be blotted out by it, and all things reduced almost to a state of death—of which this ninth plague was in a certain sense the shadow cast before.

Such a cloud would be even more terrible in Egypt, sunny Egypt, than in other countries ; for there, as we have already seen, the sky is almost always clear, and heavy rains unknown. But in any place, and under any conditions, it must have been full of horror and misery. Nothing could represent this more forcibly than the short sentence "Neither rose any from his place for three days." It was an horror of great darkness ; it rested on them like a pall ; they knew not what dangers might be around them, what judgment was next to happen : they had not been forewarned of this plague, and they could not tell but it might be only a prelude to some more awful visitation : their soul melted in them, for fear of those things that might come upon them : they dared not move from chamber to chamber, nor even from seat to seat : wherever they chanced to be at the moment when the darkness fell upon them, there they must remain. Pharaoh might call in vain for his guards ; they could not come to him. Moses and Aaron were no longer within reach, for none could go to seek them. Masters could not command their slaves, nor slaves hasten to obey their master's call :

the wife could not flee to her husband, nor the child cling to its parents : the same fear was upon all, both high and low ; the same paralysing terror and dismay possessed them every one. As says the patriarch Job, they “laid hold on horror” (Job xviii. 20). And this continued for three days and nights : they had no lamps nor torches : either they could not kindle them, or they dared not move to procure them : they were silent in darkness, like men already dead. Hope and expectation of returning light might at first support them ; but hope delayed through seventy-two weary hours would presently die out, and leave them to despair. The darkness would become more oppressive and intolerable the longer it continued ; “felt” upon their bodies as a physical infliction, and “felt” even more in their souls in agonies of fear and apprehension ; such a darkness as that which, in the book of Revelation, the fifth angel pours out upon the seat of the beast—“Whose kingdom was full of darkness, and they gnawed their tongues for pain, and blasphemed God because of their pains and sores, and repented not of their deeds” (Rev. xvi. 10).

If there be any truth in the traditions of the Jews on this subject, there were yet greater alarms under this canopy of darkness, this palpable obscurity, than any which would naturally arise out of the physical infliction. Darkness is a type of Satan’s kingdom ; and Satan had some liberty in Egypt to walk up and down upon the land, and to go to and fro in it. The Jewish Rabbis tell us that the devil and his angels were let loose during these three dreadful

days ; that they had a wider range and greater liberty than usual for working mischief. They describe these evil spirits going among the wretched people, glued to their seats as they were, with terror ; frightening them with fearful apparitions ; piercing their ears with hideous shrieks and groans ; driving them almost to madness with the intensity of their fears ; making their flesh creep, and the hair of their head to stand on end. Such a climax seems to be referred to by the Psalmist, "He cast upon them the fierceness of his anger, wrath, and indignation and trouble, by sending evil angels among them" (Ps. lxxviii. 49).

The Egyptians, like the Persians, Phœnicians, and other ancient nations, worshipped the sun under the name of Osiris, regarding it both as their common ancestor, and as their lord. We read in Diodorus—"The first generation of men in Egypt, contemplating the glory of the world above, judged that there were two chief gods which were eternal—viz. the Sun and the Moon, the first of which they called Osiris, and the other Isis" (l. 1, c. 11).

Plutarch says—"Horus, the son of Isis, was the first who sacrificed to the sun. The Egyptians offer, three times every day, incense and sweet odours to the sun" (De Isid. et Osirid. c. 52). Homer ascribed to the sun both intellect and omniscience,— "The sun, who beholds all things, and hears all things" (Odyssey, l. 12, v. 108). Porphyry has handed down to us a prayer which was used in Ethiopia at funerals, the remains of the dead person being lifted up towards

heaven in an ark or coffin while it was recited. "O Sovereign Lord, the Sun, and all ye other deities, who bestow life upon mankind, receive me, I beseech you, and suffer me to be admitted to the society of the immortals" (de Abstin. l. 4). The Egyptians were in-



The King and Queen, with their Children, praying to the Sun.

timately connected with the Ethiopians, and their ceremonies and religious customs were, for the most part, alike. The kings of Egypt were also regarded as descendants of the sun, and as the representatives of that luminary upon earth. The name Pharaoh, which was the common title of the native kings of Egypt, is expressed in hieroglyphics by the same

symbol which represents the sun. Many of the kings of Egypt were named Rameses, i.e., born of the sun. Another title given to them was, Ruler of On, or Heliopolis, the City of the Sun. Potiphara, whose daughter Joseph married, was a priest of the sun, as his name implies. The temple of the sun at Heliopolis is described at length by Strabo. Cambyses destroyed it, overthrowing the obelisks, of which there were a great number, and burning the temple with fire. Two of the obelisks he sent to Rome, where they now occupy conspicuous positions in the city; and one remains yet upon its original site in Egypt. They are single stones, about sixty feet in height above the pedestals. These monuments were sacred to the sun.



Figures praying;
with a Star.

The sun was, during the continuance of the plague of darkness, blotted out from the Egyptian sky: either their chief god had forsaken them, and turned against his vicegerent upon earth, or the God of Moses had prevailed against them both.

In the intensity of their darkness, unrelieved by any artificial light, the people would bethink themselves of the brilliant illumination they had been in the habit of making in honour of their god, as described by Herodotus, "At the sacrifice solemnised at Sais the assembly is held by night: they suspend before their houses in the open air lamps, which are filled with oil mixed with salt: a wick floats on the top, which will burn all night: the feast is called the feast of

lamps. Such of the Egyptians as do not attend the ceremony burn lamps in like manner before their houses, so that on this night, not Sais only but all Egypt is illuminated. A religious motive is assigned for the festival itself, and for the illumination by which it is distinguished" (Herod. ii. 62).

Night, being supposed to divide the empire of the heavens with day, received also its share of divine honours. Darkness existed before light; and therefore darkness was revered as the most ancient of all deities. Among the verses usually ascribed to Orpheus is a hymn addressed to Night, beginning—"Night, parent of gods and men!" (Hymn. ad Noct. v. 1.) Plutarch says—"The Egyptians reverence the blind mouse, because they consider darkness to be more ancient than light" (Sympos. l. 4, qu. 5). This creature has been found embalmed in the tombs of Thebes. Herodotus says they were sacred to Buto (l. ii. c. 67). Cudworth gives the following from Damascius—"The Egyptians hold that the first beginning or cause of things was darkness beyond all conception, an unknown darkness." Here, then, was such a darkness as surpassed all former experience and all comprehension; and that, too, brought upon them not by the deity to whom they paid their adorations, but by the God of Israel.

Not less miraculous than this plague of darkness was the fact that during all the time that it prevailed in Egypt the children of Israel had light in their dwellings. From some of the former plagues the land of Goshen had been exempt: there were no

swarms of flies in Goshen ; in the land of Goshen was no hail : but the plague of darkness, it would seem, not only spared the Jewish quarter, but also the separate houses and families of Israel, wherever they might be situated. It is evident, from the history of the passover (Exod. xii. 27), "where the destroying angel is said to have passed over the houses" upon which the blood was sprinkled, that though the bulk of the Jewish people may have dwelt in Goshen, yet there were many families living in the towns and streets of Egypt, being compelled to do so either by their occupation or by the will of their taskmasters. But no matter where they dwelt. God had said to Pharaoh "I will put a division between my people and thy people;" now, therefore, though darkness filled the houses of the one—a darkness so profound, so gross, that it must have seemed to them as if the sun were blotted from the heavens—the others still enjoyed their customary light, and warmth, and cheerfulness. "There was a thick darkness in all the land of Egypt three days ; but all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings" (Exod. x. 22).

Thus, again, the vanity of the religious practices of Egypt was plainly shown. Where were now their gods? Let them pray to the sun ; let them entreat their lord and king Osiris ; he would not look on them, nor give them one ray of his comfort. Let them implore the darkness ; it would not listen to them, nor depart from them. The Israelites, on the contrary, who had never, as a nation, bowed the knee to these

creatures, nor had been attracted by their glory to give them the homage due to God alone, were filled with light and warmth. The LORD of heaven and earth sent down his blessing upon their houses, singling them out wherever they might be, and made even the darkness to be light about them. And now, perhaps, they would better understand the worth and excellency of that daily gift of God which men enjoy too generally without much thought of Him whose Word created and whose mercy sends it. Looking upon the walls of blackness which were drawn around the houses of the Egyptians, they would learn to prize the glorious light and sunshine which still prevailed in all their dwellings: they would compare their own condition, even as slaves and bondsmen, with the misery of those who had their habitations in the fairest palaces of Egypt—fair no longer now, but dark and desolate; and so they would doubtless look upward with gratitude to their almighty God, and confess the security and happiness of those who trust in Him.

We ought to take a similar view of our privileges as God's people. We are not in darkness. God has given us the light of his gospel. He has said to us, "Arise, shine, for thy light is come!" Others around us, and very near us, are plunged in the deepest gloom of ignorance and superstition, while we are taught to know God's will, and strengthened with sufficient grace to do it. We are to make good use of these advantages. The day is given us, this day of gospel light, that we may do our duty in it. God will have us faithful to our trust. If we abuse it, either by idle-

ness or wilful disobedience, He will take away the light from us, and cast us into outer darkness. There was darkness in Sodom for one night; there was darkness in Egypt for three days; there was darkness in Jerusalem and on Mount Calvary for three hours; a solemn portent in every instance of the awful destruction which was to follow. The darkness which is reserved for the impenitent will also be a darkness to be felt,—dimness of anguish for ever.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE DEATH OF THE FIRST-BORN.

Death of the First-born—Lamentations of the Egyptians—The Israelites thrust out—Jewels of Silver and Jewels of Gold.

THE last and most dreadful of all the plagues of Egypt was foretold to Pharaoh in the first message which God sent him. "Thus saith the LORD, Israel is my son, even my first-born. And I say unto thee, let my son go, that he may serve me: and if thou refuse to let him go, behold, I will slay thy son, even thy first-born." A warning was thus given from the very first of the desolation which must surely follow if the king of Egypt should persist in his infatuated opposition to the demands of Jehovah; and this warning was repeated before nearly every one of the plagues, which by their increasing and cumulative severity after each successive refusal, marked the downward course of this unhappy nation, and showed them the fatal end to which they were approaching.

Nine plagues had now been sent upon Egypt, and after a short period of affliction each of the nine had been removed. The first six had fallen upon the waters, upon the cattle, upon the plants, and upon the persons of the Egyptians, but had not struck directly at the life of any human being. Then came the plague of hail, by which those only who refused to

take shelter from it were destroyed ; after that the locusts ; and then the plague of darkness. This was probably the most alarming of the nine ; and may have caused insanity and death to many. No mention is made of any such consequences, but it is not probable that such a period of misery and gloom could have been endured, at all events by the more infirm among the Egyptians without some fatal results

All these successive visitations had produced no salutary effect upon Pharaoh and his people. God had stricken them, but they were not sick ; he had beaten them, but they felt it not (Prov. xxiii. 35). The judgments had been mercifully graduated, with a view rather to chasten than to destroy, to save life and not to kill ; if they had yielded when their creature comforts were attacked they need not have suffered any serious loss ; if they had obeyed when their cattle were destroyed, their children had been spared. Men and nations who will not observe the signs of God's displeasure have only themselves to thank for the weightier judgments, by which their stubborn spirits are at last subdued and broken.

The plague of darkness seems to have made so much impression upon Pharaoh as almost to have induced him to consent to God's demand. He called for Moses, and said, "Go ye, serve the LORD ; only let your flocks and your herds be stayed : let your little ones also go with you " (Exod. x. 24). Moses insists that all the cattle must go with them ;—"there shall not an hoof be left behind ; for thereof must we take to serve the LORD our God, and we know not with what we must

serve him, till we be come thither. The king, who would release the people, will not part with their cattle; all or nearly all the oxen and sheep of Egypt had perished in the storm of hail and lightning, and these herds of Goshen were of immense importance. He is enraged at the demand of Moses, and, reckless of consequences, drives him out of his presence;—"Get thee from me; take heed to thyself; see my face no more: for in that day that thou seest my face thou shalt die." And Moses takes him at his word—"Thou hast spoken well," he answers; "I will see thy face again no more."

But before he leaves the presence chamber he has one last message to deliver. He turns upon the king with the solemn and now familiar preface "Thus saith the LORD!" When God speaketh, even kings must hear. Pharaoh cannot choose but listen to this speech. He knows the man and his communication, and he would fain shut his ears against him, as he will certainly shut his heart; but whether he will hear, or whether he will forbear, he knows too well that God's threatenings are not a vain thing like his own, but will surely come to pass. "Thus saith the LORD" has been the prelude to many grievous judgments already; and in spite of his angry boastings, Pharaoh's heart stands still as the words of awful import are pronounced, and becomes as a stone within him.

He is impressed also with the change that has come upon Moses, this meekest of men. Moses can now be angry as well as the king: he is not afraid to brave the power of Pharaoh, and to pour contempt upon his threats. "The man Moses," we are told,

was at this time "very great in the land of Egypt in the sight of Pharaoh's servants, and in the sight of the people" (Exod. xi. 3). He now asserts his dignity and magnifies his office before Pharaoh as a prophet of the Most Highest. "Thus saith the LORD, About midnight will I go out into the midst of Egypt; and all the first-born in the land of Egypt shall die, from the first-born of Pharaoh that sitteth upon his throne, even unto the first-born of the maid-servant that is behind the mill; and all the first-born of beasts. And there shall be a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt, such as there was none like it, nor shall be like it any more. But against any of the children of Israel shall not a dog move his tongue, against man or beast: that ye may know how that the LORD doth put a difference between the Egyptians and Israel. And all these thy servants shall come down unto me, and bow down themselves unto me, saying, Get thee out and all the people that follow thee: and after that I will go out. And he went out from Pharaoh in a great anger."

Immediately after this God prepares his people for the great event by which he designs to bring about, at one and the same time, the destruction of the Egyptians and the deliverance of Israel. Moses had no doubt been busy during the time that the plagues were upon Egypt in collecting the Israelites together, and making preparations for their departure, so that they might be ready at any time with short notice. They are here spoken of as the "congregation" of Israel, which implies an united and

organised body ; and to them, as a congregation, the ordinance of the passover, with the command to be in readiness immediately afterwards to leave the country is given.

It is to be observed that in this last plague God is represented as descending in his own person. It is no longer the man Moses, standing as a mediator between the king of Egypt and the King of kings. God himself awakes to judgment ; he hath girt his sword upon his thigh, and is come down ;—" Thus saith the Lord, About midnight will I go out into the midst of Egypt " (Exod. xi. 4). This solemn assurance, though it might well strike terror into the hearts of the miserable Egyptians, would encourage and confirm the Israelites. What God had undertaken, could not fail, could not miscarry. The course of Moses' policy with Pharaoh hitherto had brought them no deliverance, but some increase of their sufferings, and many disappointments. Now they might feel assured that the promised rescue was at hand. The God of their fathers has given over the Egyptians appointed unto death, and is gathering the Israelites together for safety and release. Through the fall of Egypt salvation is come unto Israel ; and the judgment which slays the one people is ordained as a type of mercy and redemption for the other, to be commemorated evermore.

The death of the first-born has of course been made the subject of many objections and many explanations. By some it is attributed to a sudden sickness or epidemic like the plague, which has fre-

quently raged in Egypt in modern times, and which was at one time believed to take its rise there. In the year 1835 the plague destroyed in all Egypt more than 200,000 persons, and in one city alone—Cairo, 80,000, or one-third of the entire population. Manetho, the Egyptian, speaks of a very great plague in the reign of Semempses, about 2500 B.C., that is about 1000 years before the date ascribed to the Exodus.

In the wilderness, when the people murmured after the death of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, a plague fell upon the people, in which, during the short interval while Moses was entreating the Lord, and Aaron was running in haste to put on incense, and to make an atonement, there died 14,700; and this, although a plague or pestilence, is described as God's own doing; "Get you up from among this congregation," he had said to Moses, "that I may consume them as in a moment" (Num. xvi. 45). When David numbered Israel, a pestilence cut off in three days 70,000 men (2 Sam. xxiv. 15); and in that instance it was "the angel of the Lord" that "destroyed the people."

So now in Egypt it may have been "the pestilence that walketh in darkness" which slew the first-born in every house of the Egyptians, God himself going with it, and directing it. David says: "He made a way to his anger; He spared not their soul from death, but gave their life over to the pestilence; and smote all the first-born in Egypt, the chief of their strength in the tabernacles of Ham" (Ps. lxxviii. 50, 51).

If God thus made use of natural means in a supernatural manner, as in the case of the locusts, and generally of the other plagues, the miracle would not, on that account, be less miraculous. But there are circumstances in the account of this plague which distinguish it from any known or specific form of disease. The first-born only were smitten; these were singled out in every family with unerring precision, the houses of the Israelites, wherever the blood of the lamb was sprinkled on the door-posts, being passed over. The death of all those thousands, both of man and beast, took place at the same instant—"at midnight." Every one of these extraordinary events had been foretold by Moses. Whatever explanations modern scepticism may suggest, they were admitted without hesitation both by the Egyptians and the Jews to be the Lord's doing, and marvellous in their eyes. Pharaoh rose up in the night, and sent for Moses and Aaron in haste; the king and his servants, and all the Egyptians together, were startled from their sleep: there was a great cry in Egypt, for there was not an house where there was not one dead. The God whom they knew not had come among them, and made his presence felt: they stood face to face with their creator. Fear fell upon them, and an horrible dread overwhelmed them; their flesh trembled for fear of Him, and they were afraid of his judgments. The sins of the parents were now visited upon the children; the seed of evil doers was cut off. Slaughter was prepared for the children, for the iniquity of their fathers.

Is God unrighteous, then, that taketh vengeance? No; this is an act of retribution. The Egyptians had slain the children of the Israelites, casting their infants into the river. Now the affliction is turned upon themselves; the delight of their eyes is taken from them; all their first-born are dead, from the first-born of Pharaoh that sat upon his throne, unto the first-born of the captive that was in his dungeon.

There was a great cry throughout all the land of Egypt on that fearful night; a cry for help, where there was none to answer it. From every house the wretched people ran forth, calling in haste for the physicians of Egypt; but all their art was now of no avail. In every family the same sad tale was told, each crying to the other for help and sympathy, and each pre-occupied with his own distress. And soon this cry for help was changed into a cry of mourning—Egypt weeping for her children, and refusing to be comforted, because they are not. So the word of the Lord was fulfilled, “I will slay thy son, thy first-born: there shall be a cry throughout all the land of Egypt, such as there was none like it, nor shall be like it any more.”

The Egyptians were accustomed more than any other nation to utter loud and clamorous lamentations, not only for their dead, but also as an accompaniment of many of their religious ceremonies. In the Orphic verses mention is made of “the lamentations of the Egyptians, and the sacred libations to Osiris” (Argon, v. 32). “There are four things for which they make lamentations,” says Plutarch; “the

first is the retreating of the waters of the Nile ; the second is the north wind, because the south wind overcomes it, and prevails against it ; the third is the day, because it is shorter than the night ; and the fourth is the nakedness of the earth and the falling of the leaves from the trees" (de Isid. et Osirid. c. 39). The same writer relates that "Xenophanes the naturalist, seeing the Egyptians at their solemn feasts beating their breasts, and lamenting piteously, admonished them thus : "If these are gods whom you honour, lament not for them ; but if they are men, do not sacrifice to them" (de Super. c. 13). Maximus Tyrius, alluding to the supposed murder of Osiris by his brother Typhon, says : "The God of the Egyptians dies, and is wept over, and they show you at the same time his temple and his tomb. Their deity is considered worthy both of honour and of lamentations" (Diss. 38).

Herodotus writes thus :—"With respect to their funerals and ceremonies of mourning, whenever a man of any importance dies, the females of his family, disfiguring their heads and faces with dirt, leave the corpse in the house, and run publicly about, accompanied by their female relations, with their garments in disorder, their breasts exposed, and beating themselves severely ; the men do the same ; after which the body is carried to the embalmers" (l. 2, c. 85).

The same customs prevailed, according to Diodorus, upon the death of any of their brute deities. "When any of the sacred animals die, the Egyptians wrap them in linen, and with loud howlings beat upon



Group of Mourners in a Procession.

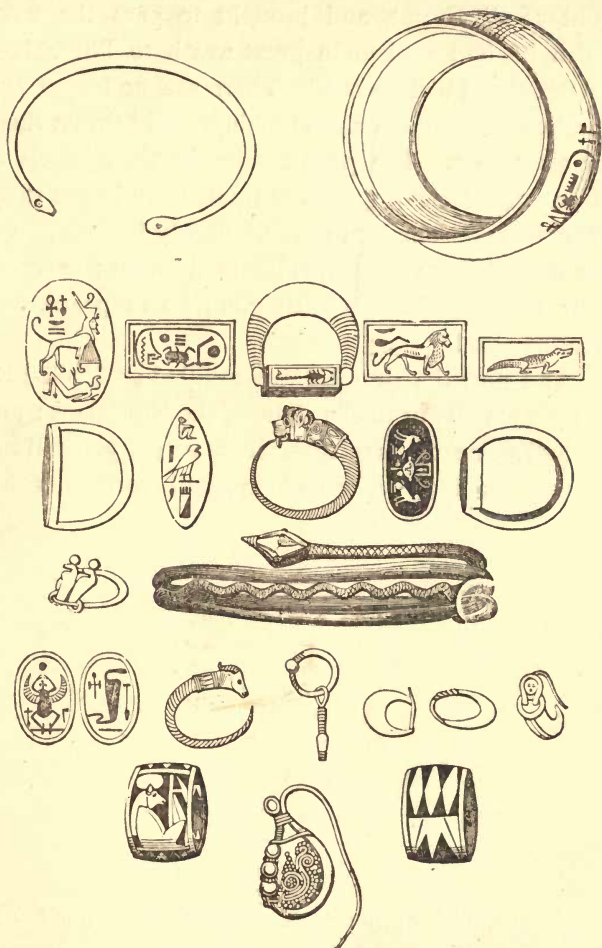
their breasts, and so carry them forth to be salted. If one of these creatures is found dead, those who discover it stand at a distance, and with lamentable cries and protestations, tell every one that they are innocent of its death" (l. 1, c. 83).

Mr. Poole remarks, "Among the many ancient Egyptian customs yet observed, the most prominent is the wailing for the dead by the women of the household, as well as by those hired to mourn. In the great cholera of 1848 I was at Cairo. This pestilence, as we all know, follows the course of rivers. Thus, on that occasion, it ascended the Nile, and showed itself in great strength at Boolák, the port of Cairo, distant from the city a mile and a half to the westward. For

some days it did not traverse this space. Every evening at sunset it was our custom to go up to the terrace on the roof of our house. There, in that calm still time, I heard each night the wail of the women of Boolák for their dead borne along in a great wave of sound a distance of two miles, the lamentation of a city stricken with pestilence" (Smith's Dictionary of the Bible).

The grief and clamour of the Egyptians on this occasion exceeded everything, either real or ceremonial, that had ever been known before. It was not the death of Osiris their God; not the change of seasons, or of day and night, which implied one deity prevailing over another; it was no such fanciful disaster as any of these, but a sorrow that came home to their hearts, a terror that struck deeply into their souls; it was a woe that no cries or wailings could equal, a desolation which no language could assuage; their first-born—the pride and hope of every house—were dead; the delight of their eyes was taken away by a stroke; and they lamented, not as a matter of ceremony or of outward show, but with a doleful lamentation. Thus once more was Egypt judged according to her works.

And now Pharaoh calls again for Moses and Aaron while it is yet night, and bids them "Rise up, and get you forth from among my people, both ye and the children of Israel; and go, serve the LORD, as ye have said. Also take your flocks and your herds, as ye have said, and be gone: and bless me also. And the Egyptians were urgent upon the

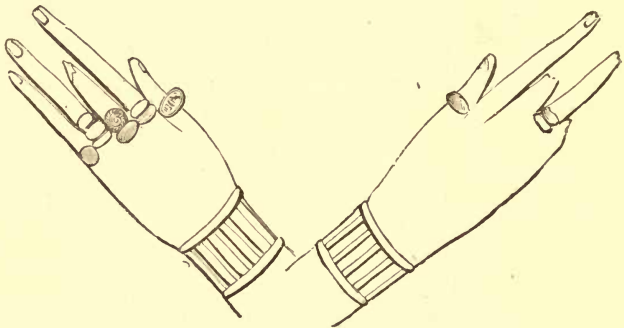


Jewels of Silver and Gold.

people, that they might send them out of the land in haste; for they said, We be all dead men" (Exod. xii. 31-33). So the Lord honoured Moses in the

sight of all Egypt, and brought to pass the word which he had spoken in great wrath to Pharaoh,—“After that I will go out.” There was no longer any question of permission. The king would thrust them out altogether. The people brought their jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment, and gave them freely to every one that asked. “Only begone!” was the cry. “Take away this doom from us; carry all your flocks and herds with you; go in peace, and bless us also!”

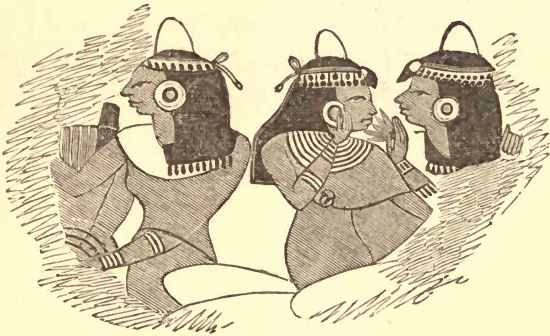
And now the promise was fulfilled: “I will give this people favour in the sight of the Egyptians: and it shall come to pass, that, when ye go, ye shall not go empty: but every woman shall borrow of her



Rings on Hands.

neighbour, and of her that sojourneth in her house, jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment: and ye shall put them upon your sons, and upon your daughters; and ye shall spoil the Egyptians” (Exod. iii. 21, 22). Ornaments of gold and silver were worn by the Egyptian women, and even by the

men, in great profusion. There, as in Eastern countries now, where the tenure of property is insecure, it was customary to invest all spare money in jewellery, which could be readily concealed or transported without difficulty from place to place. Handsome and richly ornamented necklaces were a principal part of the dress, both of men and women, in ancient Egypt. They wore many rings on their fingers, and even on




Ladies talking about their Earrings.

their thumbs. They had large gold anklets or bangles, armlets, and bracelets inlaid with precious stones. They had also seal rings, gold scarabæi, imitations of fish, reptiles, flies, and other insects. Women of every class vied with each other in the display of jewels, and the value and beauty of the trinkets which they wore formed an important topic of their conversation.

The Israelites had laboured for a long time without wages ; they now borrowed, or, as it may be rendered, *asked*, of the Egyptians their jewels as the

just payment for their work ; and these jewels were afterwards employed—according, probably, to the divine intention from the first—in making vessels for the sanctuary of the LORD.

“ And the children of Israel journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand on foot that were men, beside children. And a mixed multitude went up also with them ; and flocks and herds, even very much cattle.” “ And it came to pass, the self-same day, that the LORD did bring the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt by their armies ” (Exod. xii. 37, 51).



CHAPTER XIV.

THE PASSOVER.

The Passover : the Lamb killed : the Blood sprinkled : traces of this ceremony among the Heathen — Inscriptions over Doorways in Egypt — The Bitter Herbs — The Unleavened Bread — Kneading Troughs — The Great Cry.

THE plagues of Egypt were intended as signs, not for the Egyptians only, but also for the children of Israel, who having been so long in bondage in that country had to a great extent forgotten the traditions of their fathers, and had taken part in many of the idolatries of the people among whom they dwelt. It was God's purpose to bring them out at the same time from the house of their bondage and from the darkness of their ignorance and superstition, and so to make them free men, capable of offering a free and reasonable service to their Maker; thus he would perform the mercy promised to their forefathers that they, being delivered out of the hands of their enemies, might serve Him without fear. In furtherance of this object the three first plagues were sent upon the Egyptians and the Israelites without distinction, for both had sinned, and both required chastisement and warning. The part which God's people suffered in these earlier visitations would convince them of the great power of God, and would render

them more anxious to be under his protection ; it would lead them to submit with greater willingness to Moses, and to seek for safety by separating themselves from the Egyptian people, against whom the judgments were more immediately directed. God afterwards made a distinction between Israel and Egypt ; for the latter continued disobedient, while the former hearkened to the voice of Moses and were ready to go with him into the wilderness and to offer the sacrifices commanded. But the latter plagues, as well as the former, were seen by all the Israelites ; and although exempt from their severity, they must have suffered much indirectly, as a consequence of them. At the same time, the difference of their lot from that of the unhappy Egyptians, their masters, must have been a great encouragement to them, and have helped to keep alive their faith in the divine authority of their leader. Doubtless they waited with confidence for their final triumph, and were preparing, long beforehand, for the signal which was to bid them break their bonds, and go out as free men, enriched with the spoils of Egypt, to their promised land.

The death of the first-born of the Egyptians was made the occasion of another and a special sign for Israel, a sign to be remembered by them throughout all generations. On the same day when God declared to Pharaoh : " All the first-born in the land of Egypt shall die," he gave commandment to the congregation of Israel to make ready the Passover, and appointed the same as an ordinance to be observed for ever.

The Israelites were, for the most part, gathered together in a place by themselves ; but some of them had their dwellings mingled with the Egyptians, who, in the course of time, had become familiarised with them. In some instances Jews and Egyptians were to be found living together under the same roof, as is evident from the instructions given to Moses on Mount Sinai : “ Every woman shall borrow (or ask) of her neighbour, and of her that sojourneth in her house, jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment ” (Exod. iii. 22). God knows his people wherever they may be. If they cry, “ Woe is me that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar,” he answers them : “ O Israel, thou art my servant, thou shalt not be forgotten of me.” It is not enough, however, that God knows them ; they also must know Him. God therefore declares his purpose towards Israel, and gives them a sign which they are to observe, and which shall thenceforth be to them a token both of his mercy and of their obedience.

The account of the institution of the Passover is as follows :—“ The LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying,—This month shall be unto you the beginning of months : it shall be the first month of the year to you. Speak ye unto all the congregation of Israel, saying, In the tenth day of this month they shall take to them every man a lamb, according to the house of their fathers, a lamb for an house. And if the household be too little for the lamb, let him and his neighbour next unto his house take it, according to the number of

souls : every man, according to his eating, shall make your count for the lamb. Your lamb shall be without blemish, a male of the first year : ye shall take it out from the sheep, or from the goats. And ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month : and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening. And they shall take of the blood, and strike it on the two side-posts and on the upper door-post of the houses wherein they shall eat it. And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread ; and with bitter herbs they shall eat it. Eat not of it raw, nor sodden at all with water, but roast with fire ; his head with his legs, and with the purtenance thereof. And ye shall let nothing of it remain until the morning ; and that which remaineth of it until the morning ye shall burn with fire.

And thus shall ye eat it ; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand : and ye shall eat it in haste ; it is the LORD'S pass-over. For I will pass through the land of Egypt this night, and will smite all the first-born in the land of Egypt, both man and beast ; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment : I am the LORD. And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are : and when I see the blood, I will pass over you, and the plague shall not be upon you to destroy you, when I smite the land of Egypt. And this day shall be unto you for a memorial ; and ye shall keep it a feast to the LORD throughout your generations : ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever " (Exod. xii. 1-14).

The paschal lamb, it need hardly be remarked, was a type of Christ. It may be doubted whether the Israelites understood this at the time; but they must have known that it was in the nature of a sacrifice, and they had, doubtless, some general apprehension of its meaning, for God had said expressly, "This is the sacrifice of the LORD'S passover." The word passover, while it described the act of God's mercy in passing over the Israelites, was also applied to the victim, by the shedding of whose blood their safety was ensured. "Take you a lamb, according to your families, and kill the passover" (Exod. xii. 21). The antitype is called by the same name: "Christ, our passover, is sacrificed for us" (1 Cor. v. 7). He is "the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world" (John i. 29). He is "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Rev. xiii. 8), to deliver God's people from death.

The lamb offered by the Israelites was a male of the first year in its prime. So Christ was cut off in the midst of his days, in the prime of manhood. "Bloody, and deceitful men," saith David, "shall not live out half their days" (Ps. lv. 23). Christ died for sinners; and the blood-guiltiness and deceit of all the world was expiated by him. As a sinner, therefore, he was "cut off out of the land of the living" (Is. liii. 8) before he had lived out half his days. Nevertheless the lamb was to be without blemish: if there had been any defect in it, it would not have been effectual for its purpose: the blood might have stained the door-posts, but it would not have turned

away the sword from the household. So Christ was pure, and without spot. "He did no sin : neither was guile found in his mouth" (1 Peter ii. 22). His judge could find in him no fault at all.

The lamb was set apart four days before. So Christ was set apart, in the purpose of God. One day is with the LORD as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. It was exactly four such days, or 4000 years, from the time of the promise made to our first parents, to the time when Jesus came into the world to die for us ; and it was just four natural days before his crucifixion that he went up to Jerusalem because his time was come.

The lamb was to be slain and roast with fire, thus signifying the sufferings of Christ, who bore the wrath of God for us,—that wrath which burns like fire against all evil-doers. The punishment of the wicked is described as a "fire that is not quenched" (Mark ix. 44), "a lake that burneth with fire and brimstone" (Rev. xxi. 8). From this fire Christ saves us. He bore the indignation of the LORD in his own person, and quenched the burning heat of it in his blood.

The lamb was to be killed in the evening ; or rather between the two evenings, that is between three and six o'clock. So Christ was sacrificed in the evening. It was at the ninth hour, i.e. about three o'clock, that he cried with a loud voice, and yielded up the ghost ; and it was not until towards sunset that the spear was thrust into his side, and he was pronounced to be "dead already" (John xix. 33).

The lamb was to be sacrificed in the presence of

the whole assembly of the congregation. So Jesus Christ was put to death in the presence of all the people. It was their urgent cry: "Crucify him! crucify him!" that prevailed with Pilate. They all were the cause of it. They took the guilt upon themselves—"His blood be upon us, and upon our children" (Matt. xxvii. 25). The whole assembly of the congregation were consenting to his death.

Not a bone of the lamb was to be broken. This is expressly referred to by St. John as a prophetic symbol. The thieves crucified at the same time with Christ suffered the usual fate: their legs were broken in order to hasten their death: but when the soldiers came to Jesus, and saw that he was already dead, they brake not his legs,—“That the Scripture might be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken” (John xix. 36).

As soon as the ceremony of slaying the lamb was finished, the blood was to be taken to the entrance of the house, and sprinkled upon the side-posts and on the upper door-post. By this means the benefit of the sacrifice was to be assured to each individual of the Israelites. So the blood of Christ is to be applied to every one of those who believe in him, as a mark of their profession, and as a plea for their deliverance from death. It is like the scarlet thread bound in the window of Rahab, by virtue of which her house, and all who belonged to her, were spared. Though we be but strangers and pilgrims, as the Israelites were, dwelling in the midst of an ungodly world, we must not shrink from making our profession known:

the mark must be upon our houses, upon our families, upon our lives, that God may see it, and that all who look upon it may understand it. The blood of sprinkling, applied in the way which Moses had commanded, could alone protect the Israelite from the destroyer; and this only can make a difference between the Church of Christ and those who are given over to death as his enemies. The blood of Christ must purge our consciences also. We must draw near to him with a pure heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled. Signs and ceremonies were sufficient in themselves at Jericho or in Egypt. There was virtue then in the outward obedience: but in the Christian Church it is not so. God looks now beyond the outer porch. He is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart. It is not enough to parade the blood of Christ upon our doors as a token of our calling. We must have it in our souls as the ground of all our faith, and the effectual cause and motive of our words and works.

The sprinkling of the blood upon the door-posts may have given rise to certain traditions and customs among other nations which it may be interesting to notice. Pliny tells us of a charm by which houses were to be protected from the perils of sorcery. "If the door-posts are touched with the blood of the hyæna, the various arts of the magicians will be rendered of no effect" (Hist. Nat. l. 28, c. 27). In another place he says—"The newly-wedded bride used to anoint the door-posts of her husband's house with the fat of a wolf, in order that no hurtful spells



Door of a House at Cairo, with Inscription.

might find admittance" (*ibid.* c. 37). Again—"The ancient Romans attributed to wool a degree of religious importance, and it was in this spirit that the

newly-wedded bride was required to attach it to the door-posts of her husband's house" (*ibid.* l. 29, c. 9).

It is customary in Egypt in the present day to paint over the doorways of the houses, or upon the doors, some verse or symbol which is looked upon by the indwellers as a safeguard or charm to protect them against the entrance of evil spirits. Mr. Lane writes—"We often see in Cairo the invocation—'Yà Allàh!—O God!' sculptured over the door of a private house, and the words—'The Great Creator is the Everlasting;' or, 'He is the Great Creator, the Everlasting!' painted in black and white upon the door, both as a charm, and to remind the master of the house, whenever he enters, of his own mortality" (Modern Egyptians). Such a custom may possibly have arisen after that dreadful night in which the angel of death entered every house of the Egyptians, passing over those alone on which the sign of a propitiatory sacrifice was visibly displayed.

The solemn eating of the lamb by the several families was a further token of their inward obedience and conformity to God's law. The lamb of the first passover was intended not only to save the Israelites by its sprinkled blood, but also to give them strength for their journey by its flesh which they ate. So the atonement of Christ has for us a double object—to redeem us from death, and to strengthen and refresh our souls in the new life of faith. The blood of sprinkling saves us from the curse of sin; but it is only by taking the word of God into our souls, hiding it in our hearts, as the Psalmist expresses it,

that we can be kept from falling again into temptation. "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood," said the Saviour, "ye have no life in you" (John vi. 53). It is thus that God feeds us with food convenient for us. Christ is the bread of life. He is the lamb on which our souls must feed, that he may dwell in us, and we in him.

The sprinkling was to be performed by means of a bunch of hyssop. This was a token of purification. Hyssop was used for this purpose in many of the Jewish ceremonies: in the purification of lepers and their houses, and in the sacrifice of the red heifer. To this David refers in his penitentiary psalm: "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow" (Ps. li. 7). When our Lord was dying upon the cross, "they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to his mouth" (John xix. 29). Jesus needed no purification for himself; yet he tasted it; and the hyssop dipped in the blood which flowed from his wounded forehead was a type of the effectual cleansing of the world by his atonement. "His visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men; so shall he sprinkle many nations" (Is. lii. 14, 15).

The lamb was to be eaten with bitter herbs, most probably with endive, wild lettuce, or nettles; for these, according to Pliny, were important articles of food among the ancient Egyptians, and they are still eaten at the passover by the Jews in Eastern countries. They were designed to call to their remem-

brance the bitterness of the bondage which they had endured in Egypt; and may serve as types to us of the bitterness and misery of sin, of which we were the servants. If we would feed on Christ, it must be with repentance: we must feel the burden of those sins from which we ask to be relieved. The taste of them must be as gall and wormwood. We must weep over them, as Peter did over his unfaithfulness—bitterly.

The passover was to be eaten in haste. "Thus shall ye eat it: with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand" (Exod. xii. 11). The Israelites were to come to that feast as pilgrims, ready to start upon their journey. It was not to be their nourishment as slaves, but to give them strength for the way, that they might arise and follow where God would lead them.

So the gospel is intended to call us out of our ungodliness, and to help us on our way to a better world. Religion is of no avail to those who continue in sin. Believers are to shake off their chains, to stand, having their loins girded, and to be ready, while they feed on Christ, to follow him also, and to serve him.

In consequence of this hurried preparation and departure, "the people took their dough before it was leavened, their kneading troughs being bound up in their clothes upon their shoulders." The Egyptians used large troughs for their dough, kneading it with the feet; and it is probable that the Israelites had been accustomed to the same. But in anticipa-

tion of their journey they had, no doubt, provided themselves with small wooden bowls, such as are used by the Arabs in their wanderings now, and which serve also to contain the cakes when baked.

Harmer says—"The Arabs use small bowls for kneading unleavened cakes, which they prepare for strangers in the very desert through which Israel journeyed."

Such bowls were wrapped up by the Hebrews, with other smaller articles, in their outer garments or mantles, just as the loose

fold of their haiks or burnous are employed by the Arabs of the present day.

The unleavened bread, and the feast which was called by that name, were intended to show the Israelites that they were to leave behind them in Egypt all the idolatrous and wicked practices with which they had been, to a certain extent, implicated in that country, and to begin a new national life as God's people. It was the leaven of Egypt that made the people eager to return there, crying to Aaron, "Make us gods to go before us!" It was the leaven of the Canaanites, who ought to have been utterly destroyed, and were not, that turned away the hearts of all Israel from God, and brought about at last the overthrow and dispersion of their nation. There



Kneading dough with the feet.

was a leaven also of tradition and hypocrisy among the Pharisees, which made the law of God of none effect. And Christians must beware of the leaven of false doctrine, and of all evil communications which might corrupt the gospel; for, as St. Paul saith, "Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump? Purge out, therefore, the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump as ye are, unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth" (1 Cor. v. 6).

As soon as all these details had been observed, the lamb slain and eaten, the hyssop dipped in the blood, and the door-posts sprinkled, the doors were to be closed, and every Israelite to remain within. And now the message was delivered which, we may suppose, was in the mind of the prophet Isaiah when he wrote: "Come, my people, enter thou into thy chamber, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast. For, behold, the LORD cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquities: the earth shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain" (Is. xxvi. 20, 21).

As God shut Noah and his family into the ark, so now he shut his people into the dwellings which the blood of the lamb had sanctified and guarded. Each house was sacred and inviolable, a holy temple into which the avenger could not enter. If there was no

altar there, upon the horns of which they might have taken hold, yet there was the sacrifice and the blood poured out, greater than the altar, greater than the sanctuary, which God had himself appointed, and would certainly respect.

It must have been a very solemn time for those assembled Israelites, watching through the night, staff in hand, with girded loins, and shoes upon their feet, waiting for the promised signal! How every heart would beat, how every nerve would thrill, as the appointed hour drew nigh! The waiting must have been like that described in heaven, when the seal was broken which let loose the dreadful plagues upon the earth; when there was hail and fire, mingled with blood, and the third part of the sea became blood, and the third part of the sun and moon and stars were smitten. "There was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour" (Rev. viii. 1). Such silence must have been in the houses of the Israelites about the space of half a night. But at midnight it was broken. There was a crying without,—a distant wail,—a grievous lamentation, each moment waxing louder and more frequent. Voices of young and old, men and women, mingling in the tumult, resounding everywhere, and echoed back from every quarter and from every house, till the whole land of Egypt thrilled with the awful sound.

This was the signal which the Jews had waited for. Jehovah was now passing through the land. The LORD was with them as a terrible one. Now would the proof be shown whether the blood in which

they trusted could protect their lives,—whether the lamb whose sign was on their door-posts could stand indeed between the living and the dead, and turn aside the King of Terrors from their homes. None of them might stir out until the morning, let the cries for help be never so urgent ; their strength was to sit still : they must hear this awful sound, and know that the LORD was passing through their streets, and wait with patience, trusting that, though a thousand should fall at their side, and ten thousand at their right hand, it should not come nigh them.

And presently their fears were turned to joy. Each family counted the heads of those assembled with them, and found them safe ; not an hair of their heads had perished. It was the Lord's passover. He had passed over the houses of the Israelites when he smote the Egyptians. He had seen the blood, and had spared them according to his promise ; neither was the plague upon them to destroy them when he smote the land of Egypt.

It was a night to be much remembered both by the people of Egypt and by the children of God : a night that none could look back upon without solemnity and awe : a night to be observed both by the Jewish congregation and by the Christian Church throughout all generations.

CHAPTER XV.

THE WATERS DIVIDED.

Departure of the Israelites—Their Route—Pursuit by Pharaoh—The Pillar of Fire—The Mesh'als of Pharaoh's Host—The Passage of the Red Sea—The Destruction of the Armies of Egypt—Their Bodies exposed—Sepulchres of Egypt—the Egyptians again spoiled—Their Chariots, Arms, and Standards.

THE departure of Israel from Egypt took place on the same night as the death of the first-born; or rather early in the morning immediately after that visitation, which occurred at midnight. "They departed from Rameses in the first month, on the fifteenth day of the first month; on the morrow after the passover the children of Israel went out with an high hand in the sight of all the Egyptians" (Num. xxxiii. 3). Rameses was probably the chief town of the land of Goshen. It is impossible to identify the position of this city at the present day; but it is evident that it could not have been more than from forty to fifty miles from the Red Sea, since the Israelites, though encumbered with their children and cattle, were able to accomplish the journey in three days. The direct route to the land of Canaan would have been nearer the coast of the Mediterranean, leaving the Red Sea to the south. This would have brought them quickly to the territory of the Philistines. But God would

not expose them at once to such alarms as would then have threatened them. With Pharaoh pursuing them in their rear, and with the Philistines opposed to them in front, their position would have been, to all appearance, critical, and the demand upon their faith and courage too great. Therefore "it came to pass, when Pharaoh had let the people go, that God led them not through the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near; for God said, Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt; but God led the people about, through the way of the wilderness of the Red Sea" (Exod. xiii. 17, 18). The Psalmist says: "He led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation" (Ps. cvii. 7). It was a round-about and difficult way, but it was "the right way" for them. And such are all God's ways. Men's ways may seem nearer, but God's ways are surer. Happy are they who, in all their doubts and difficulties, hear His voice saying unto them,—“This is the way; walk ye in it.”

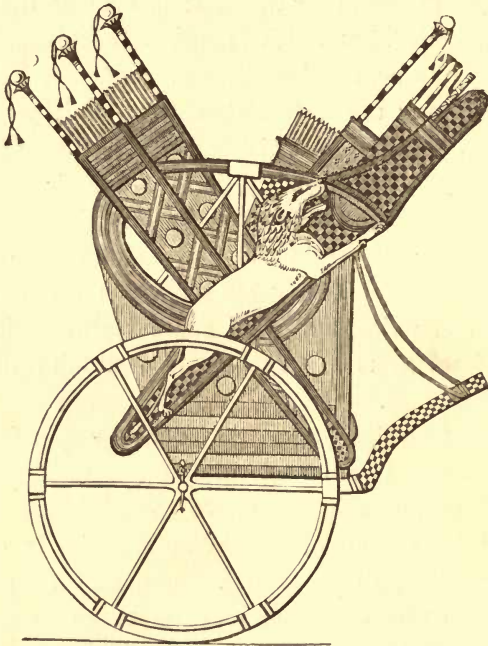
The first halting-place of the Israelites was Succoth; their second Etham, on the edge of the wilderness; their third was on the borders of the Red Sea, over against Baal Zephor. The situation of each of these towns, and the precise route followed by the children of Israel, cannot be decided with any certainty. The face of the country is much altered since those days, and where the sea formerly extended, is now dry land. Isaiah prophesied: "The LORD shall utterly destroy the tongue of the Egyptian sea; and

there shall be an highway for the remnant of his people, which shall be left, from Assyria ; like as it was to Israel in the day that he came up out of the land of Egypt" (Is. xi. 15, 16). This tongue appears to be indicated now by a long narrow plain stretching to the northward, over which it is evident that the sea once rolled, but which is now a brackish marsh. Here, it may be, the Israelites crossed. God shook his hand over the waters that night, and there was an highway through which men might pass ; and, according to the prophecy, he has done it again in later times, and the highway remains. At all events the drying up foretold by Isaiah and Zechariah is evidently here fulfilled : " He shall pass through the sea with affliction, and shall smite the waves in the sea " (Zech. x. 11). " The waters shall fail from the sea " (Is. xix. 5).

Local tradition points, however, to a spot farther south. There is a broad valley opposite Memphis, the city of Pharaoh, leading to the Red Sea. It is called " the Valley of the Wandering." It opens upon the shore of the Red Sea under a lofty mountain, the name of which may be taken to signify " the Mountain of Deliverance." This mountain, rising precipitately on the north, would shut off all escape in that direction, except a narrow way along the sea-shore, which would easily be closed against them by the hosts of Pharaoh. The sea here is broad and deep, and the Israelites, being thus shut in, might naturally turn to Moses with the cry : " Hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness ? Wherefore

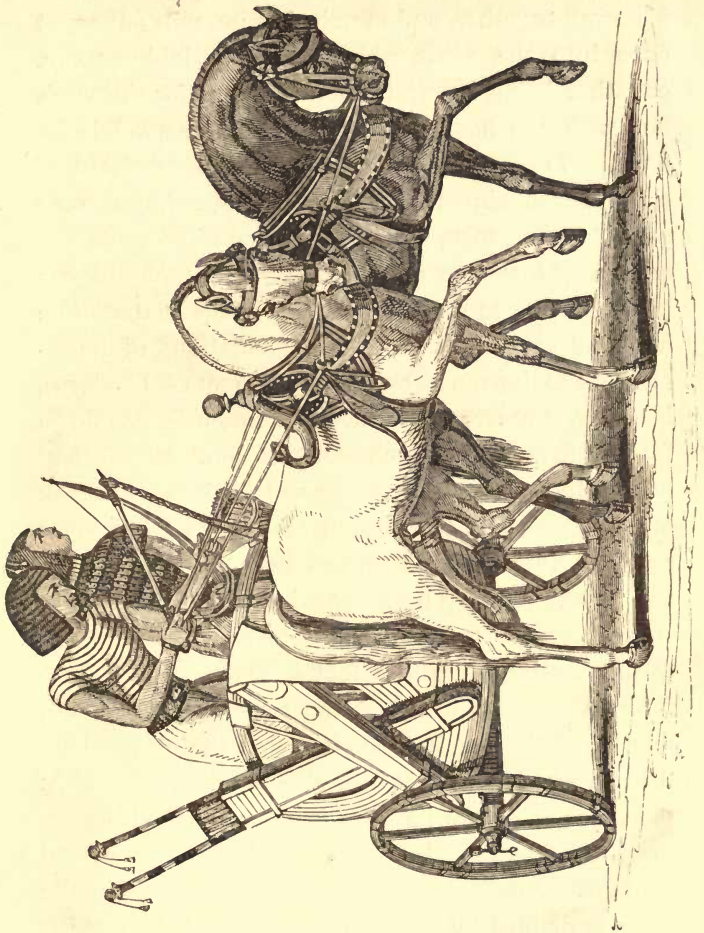
hast thou dealt with us thus, to carry us forth out of Egypt?" (Exod. xiv. 11.)

The name Pi-hahiroth, where the Israelites were overtaken, means a bed of reeds; and therefore does not necessarily point to the site of any town or vil-



Egyptian War Chariot.

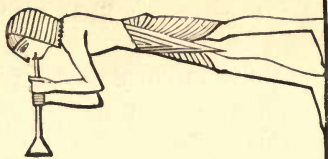
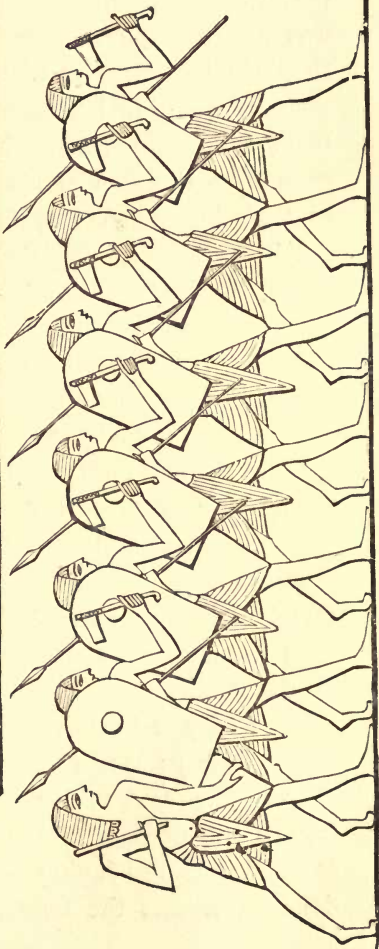
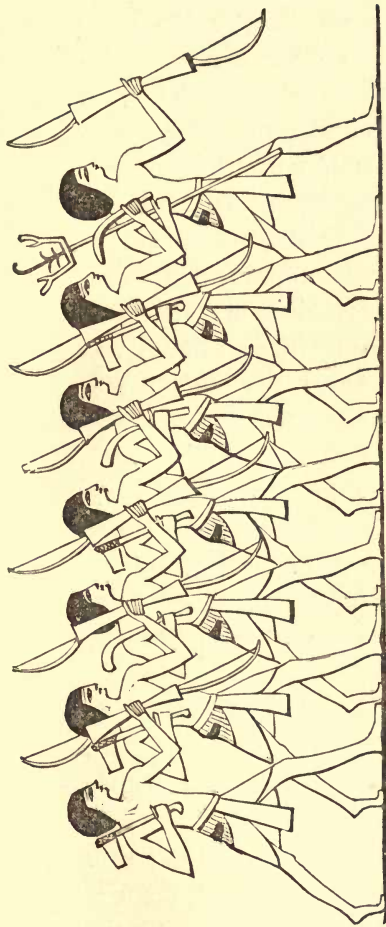
lage. The Lord had turned the journey of the Israelites in that direction, and had caused them to encamp on that spot, in order to entice the Egyptians to pursue them. "Pharaoh will say of the children of Israel, They are entangled in the land, the wilderness hath shut them in" (or, as it may be rendered, the wil-



Egyptian War Chariot.

derness is closed to them ; they are shut in from it).
“ And I will harden Pharaoh’s heart, that he shall follow after them ” (Exod. xiv. 3, 4). As soon, therefore, as the king heard where they were, he gathered

his army together, and marched in pursuit, falling at once into the snare which had been laid for him, or rather being led up thither as an ox for the sacrifice, with the hook in its nose and the goad in its flank. The army which followed him consisted of six hundred chosen chariots, each carrying two, or perhaps three, men, armed with spears, and bows and arrows. Horsemen also are mentioned, though it has been questioned whether the Egyptians at that time had any cavalry, since no representations of horsemen are to be found on the monuments. Diodorus, however, enumerating the army of Sesosis, sets down foot-soldiers 600,000, chariots of war 27,000, and horsemen 24,000; and Moses and Miriam also speak of the cavalry in their hymn of praise: "The horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea" (Exod. xv. 1, 21). It may be assumed, therefore, that there were horsemen as well as charioteers, and in addition to these a large army of foot-soldiers. As all these forces were overthrown at the same moment in the depths of the sea, it is evident that the place where they perished must have been several miles in breadth: the space taken up by the Israelites must also have been considerable, but these had already passed through. Another point to be observed is that the sea was divided by "a strong east wind," from which it may be inferred that the channel through which the two hosts passed lay east and west, and that their advance was towards the east, as would be their natural course at either of the localities described. Here, then, on the evening of the third day, the Israel-



Disciplined Troops of the Eighteenth Dynasty.

ites were encamped, having the sea before them, and the armies of Egypt approaching in their rear. To this spot they had been conducted by the pillar of cloud and of fire; and this pillar was still with them, standing between the two great hosts, so that the one could not come near the other. This was a guide and defence manifest to their senses: they could see it with their eyes; it was a standing miracle, a continual witness of God's presence among them, and a token of his help and protection. God gave them this sign of his providence in compassion to their infirmities, and because their Church was yet in its infancy. By day there was the pillar of cloud casting its grateful shade over them, and rendering the glare and heat of the desert more tolerable; and by night there was the pillar of fire, shedding its brightness upon their path, and making even the darkness to be light about them. "Thou leddest them in the day by a cloudy pillar, and in the night by a pillar of fire, to give them light in the way wherein they should go" (Neh. ix. 12).

With this account of the divine guidance of Israel may be compared the following descriptions from profane historians. Xenophon, in his history of the Lacedæmonian republic, says, "I will now explain to you how the king goes forward to battle with his army: When he has first sacrificed, the fire-bearing attendant, taking fire from the altar, leads the way to the borders of the country; the king then again sacrifices to Jupiter and to Minerva, and having done so, crosses the borders of the country. Fire

from these sacrifices, never to be extinguished, leads the way" (c. 13).

"When Timoleon set sail for Sicily, suddenly the heaven seemed to be rent asunder, and to pour upon his ship a bright and spreading flame, which soon formed itself into a torch, such as is used in the sacred mysteries, and having conducted them through their whole course, brought them to that quarter of Italy for which they were designed to steer" (Plut. Timol.)

Quintus Curtius thus describes the progress of Alexander:—"The signal of marching was given by huge torches, raised upon a lofty pole, so as to be seen by all; the fire of these was visible by night, and the smoke by day" (l. 5, c. 2). "This was the order of march; the fire which they call sacred and eternal was borne in advance upon an altar of silver; the Magi followed singing a hymn" (l. 3, 3).

To these instances may be added two of peculiar interest, as proving that this custom must have been known, and in all probability practised, by the contemporaries of Moses. In an inscription of the ancient empire an Egyptian general is compared to a "flame streaming in advance of his army;" and on a well-known papyrus the commander of an expedition is called "a flame in the darkness at the head of his soldiers" (Speaker's Comment.) There is a kind of cresset called Mesh'al carried by the Egyptians at the head of some of their processions at the present time, which, it is likely, bears some resemblance to the burning lights which went before the armies of Egypt and other ancient nations. It consists of three or

more gratings or receptacles, filled with burning wood or other inflammable matter, fixed to a framework of iron, and borne aloft upon a pole.



Mesh'als.

The pillar of fire, towering up to heaven in a blaze of glory, must have made the cressets of Pharaoh's army appear mean and contemptible to those of the Jews who had ever had an opportunity of seeing them. But notwithstanding this visible proof of God's presence and conduct, the Israelites could not feel secure. As soon as they beheld the Egyptians they were afraid. Already they began to murmur against Moses,—“Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone that we may serve the Egyptians? for it had been better for us to

serve the Egyptians than that we should die in the wilderness" (Exod. xiv. 12). But Moses answers them with noble confidence—"Fear ye not: stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will shew you to day; for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to-day, ye shall see them again no more for ever. The LORD shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace" (xiv. 13, 14).

And yet it would seem that Moses did not himself know by what means God would accomplish their deliverance. "Wherefore criest thou unto me?" is the answer of the Lord to his supplications; "speak unto the children of Israel that they go forward" (xiv. 15). The way was ready for them, if only they would pluck up courage and advance. Those who would have God's help must be prepared to use it. Moses then lifted up his rod and stretched forth his hand over the sea; and the great east wind came down upon the waters and divided them. "He divideth the sea with his power" (Job xxvi. 12). "He bloweth with his wind, and the waters flow" (Ps. cxlvii. 18). The sea became dry land, and the waters were gathered up in an heap on either side, and they became as a solid wall upon the right hand and on the left.

Into this miraculous valley the whole host of Israel went down. "They went through the flood on foot" (Ps. lxvi. 6). The pillar of fire descended first into the deep: Moses and Aaron followed it: and the men of Israel, 600,000, besides women and children, went after them. As they advanced the

waves of the sea rolled back and stood aside to let them pass: the threatening billows lifted up their crests, but stayed as if they had been frozen suddenly and could not flow. We may imagine how anxiously the Israelites, who had begun already to cry out with fear, would advance, trembling and astonished, into this fearful pass: how they would fix their eyes upon the fiery pillar, wondering how far the perilous path would lead them, and what might be the end of such a venture; and how, at each step, their courage would increase, their hopes would rise, their hearts would swell with wondrous gratitude and praise to their Almighty King! At length, when the farther shore was reached, and they began to rise up over the steep sand or shingle, and to look back upon the raging sea, withheld on either side only by the walls of water through which they had passed in safety, their voice would break forth into songs of triumph, and they would resolve never again to doubt the providence of Him who had shown them such great wonders, and manifested forth his mercy towards them.

Very different would be the thoughts of the Egyptians. Eager in the pursuit, they had ventured down into the abyss, without perhaps knowing or perceiving whither they were going: but, once entangled there, their courage failed them, and they would gladly have retraced their steps. The billows which had stood as firm as rocks of ice, began now to sway and yield. The Israelites whom they had pursued were vanished out of sight, for the cloud was between them. The Egyptians were in dark-

ness, and could only see by the lightning which flashed incessantly above their heads the vague but awful perils which surrounded them. There was a sound in the heavens above that warned them of approaching doom. There were earthquakes under foot by which their chariots were broken and the wheels clogged, so that they drave them heavily. There were storms and tempests, and a deluge of rain such as had never been known in Egypt except during the recent plague. There was a terror in their hearts, like the panic which seized upon the host of the Syrians when God made them hear a rumour in their camp, and put them to flight. All these are referred to in the Psalms, where many particulars of this awful journey are supplied which are not recorded in the book of Exodus, but which were, doubtless, preserved in the memory of all Israel, and handed down in song and tradition from one generation to another. "The waters saw thee, O God, the waters saw thee; they were afraid; the depths also were troubled. The clouds poured out water; the skies sent out a sound: thine arrows also went abroad. The voice of thy thunder was in the heaven: thy lightnings lightened the world: the earth trembled and shook. Thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known. Thou leddest thy people like a flock, by the hand of Moses and Aaron" (Ps. lxxvii. 16-20).

But though the Egyptians would have fled, no way of escape was open for them. Now, too late, they confessed, "The LORD fighteth for Israel; let

us flee from the face of Israel" (Exod. xiv. 25). When the morning appeared, and the people of God were safe, Moses again stretched forth his hand ; and the sea returned to his strength ; and the waters came again upon the Egyptians, upon their chariots, and upon their horsemen ; "and the LORD overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea." "Thus the LORD saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians : and Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea-shore" (Exod. xiv. 30).

The mention of the dead lying scattered upon the shore, with which the account of the Egyptian catastrophe concludes, is not without significance. In common with all ancient nations, the Egyptians considered it the greatest of all misfortunes for the bodies of the dead to remain unburied. It was among the penalties of disobedience denounced against Israel, in their turn, by Moses : "Thy carcase shall be meat unto all fowls of the air, and unto the beasts of the earth, and no man shall fray them away" (Deut. xxviii. 26). It was supposed that the departed shade could find no rest until the body was interred. Horace describes the ghost of Archytas pleading with a sailor for three handfuls of sand to be flung upon his body, which had been cast up by the sea, that he might be able to rest in peace—

"Whate'er thy haste, oh ! let my prayer prevail,
Thrice throw the sand, then hoist the flying sail."

l. i. carm. 28.

The Egyptians of modern times provide most carefully for the burial of their dead, and seem also

to attribute some consciousness of its position to the defunct body, even after it is interred. They visit the tombs, and make addresses to their dead relatives, and even present offerings to them. "It is common for a Muslim on a military expedition, or during a long journey, especially in the desert, to carry his grave linen with him. Not unfrequently does it happen that a traveller, in such circumstances, has even to make his own grave. Overcome by fatigue, or left behind by his companions, he makes a trench in the sand, lies down in it wrapped in his grave-clothes, and covers himself, with the exception of his face, with the sand taken up in making the trench. Thus he waits for death, trusting to the wind to complete his burial" (Lane, *Modern Egyptians*). Still greater importance was attached by the Egyptians of ancient times to all funeral ceremonies. Their lamentations and public mournings have been already mentioned (Chapter XIII). They were not satisfied to bury their dead out of sight. Most frequently they embalmed them, and preserved them in chambers either built of solid masonry, or hollowed in the rocks. Notwithstanding their gross superstition they believed in the immortality of the soul. The righteous, they maintained, were received after death into the company of that Being who represented the Divine Goodness; while the souls of the wicked were compelled to undergo a series of purgatorial changes, inhabiting the bodies of many different animals in succession, and returning eventually to their own. For this, or some other reason not clearly understood, they

were anxious to preserve the remains of their dead relatives for as long a time as possible, building their sepulchres of great strength, and adorning them with paintings and sculpture. Along the bare mountains that skirt the valley of the Nile in Upper Egypt, are an immense number of sepulchral grottoes, the entrances of which are conspicuously seen from the river; and in the sandy slopes at the foot of the mountains are innumerable pits and tombs of solid masonry.

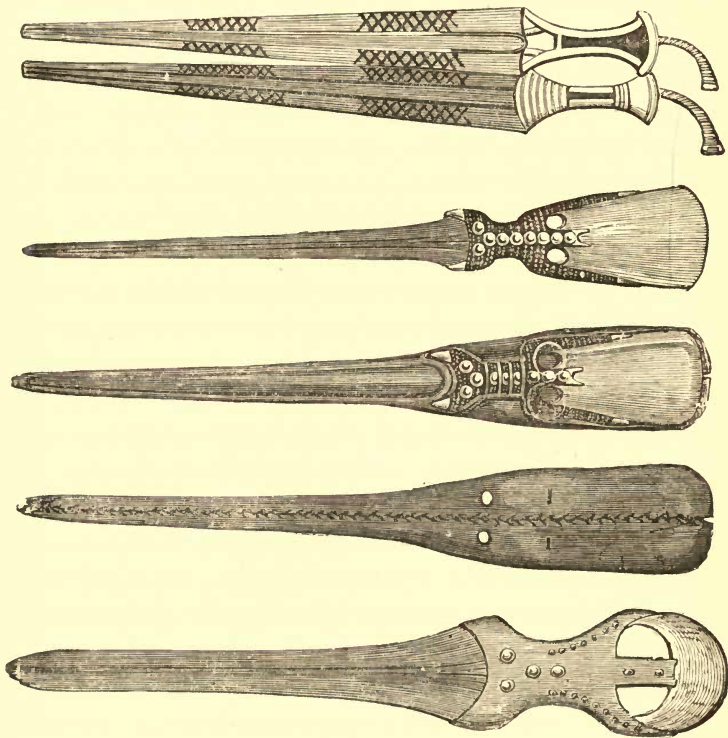
Burretini describes some of these catacombs :—
“ The entrance into them is by a square well, where holes are cut on each side for the convenience of those who descend. These wells are not of equal depth, but the shallowest are not less than 35 feet. At the bottom of the well there is a square opening, and a passage of 10 or 15 feet long, leading into several square vaulted chambers, each side of which is usually 15 or 20 feet; and in the midst of every one of the four sides of the chamber is a bench cut out of the rock, upon which the embalmed bodies lie. At the head of them there is commonly an idol; at the feet the image of a bird; and on the walls are hieroglyphics. Besides the principal bodies, there are other smaller ones, and particularly of children, which lie on the ground. Sometimes there are no less than twenty-five or thirty of these chambers or grotts, having communication one with another; and the descent to them all is by one well.”

Conspicuous above all these dwellings of the dead are the pyramids, those vast, imposing, structures

which stand as imperishable memorials of the pride and folly of the ancient Egyptian kings : these were intended as their sepulchres ; upon these tens of thousands of slaves and captives were forced to labour for many years in the burning heat of the desert. Upon works of a similar character the Israelites had been employed, making the brick with which the interior of the tombs was lined. It was to these, perhaps, that the people pointed when they chode with Moses—" Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness ?" (Exod. xiv. 11). The Egyptians were now dead, and their bodies lay exposed to the birds of the air and the wild beasts : they were cast out from their graves, and their carcasses became as dung upon the face of the earth. This was the end of their pride. Instead of the mighty pyramids, and the sweet spices, and the mummy chests, in which they had delighted—" much ado in earthing up a carcase"—the vision of John was foreshadowed—" I saw an angel standing in the sun ; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together, that ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of men, both free and bond, both small and great." (Rev. xix. 17).

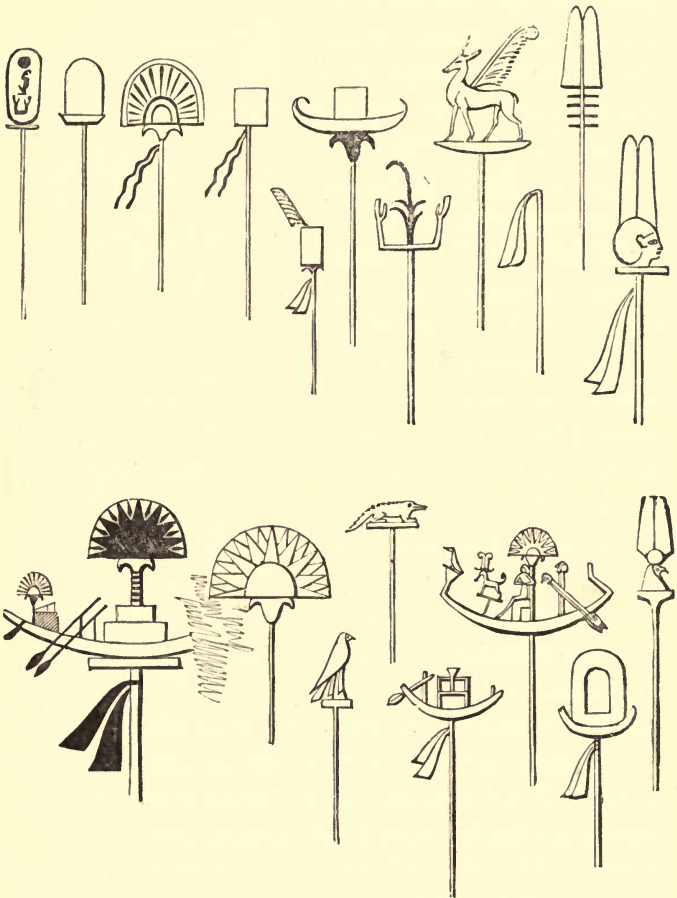
This exposure of the bodies would also give opportunity to the Israelites to " spoil the Egyptians." The weapons of their leaders and chief men of war were richly studded with gold, and the handles

of their spears and battle-axes overlaid with silver. Their corselets, too, were richly ornamented, and their standards numerous and costly. Many of their cha-



Inlaid Daggers.

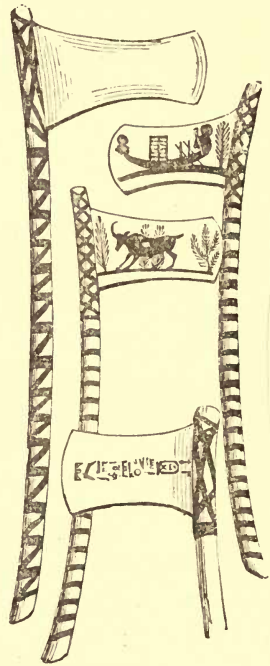
riots, even, were inlaid with gold and silver, and their horses wore feathers upon their heads, set in devices of wrought gold. God had promised his people from the first that they should not go empty-handed (see Chap. XIII.) He had given them favour in the sight



Standards.

of the Egyptians, so that they freely offered them their ornaments and jewels, as the price of their departure out of their country, after the death of their

first-born; and, now that the hosts of Pharaoh had perished, all that they had carried with them became the property of their foes. Pharaoh had said: "I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil" (Exod. xv. 9); but a greater than Pharaoh was there. "Was the LORD displeased against the rivers? was thine anger against the rivers? was thy wrath against the sea, that thou didst ride upon thine horses, and thy chariots of salvation?" "The mountains saw thee, and they trembled; the overflowing of the water passed by: the deep uttered his voice, and lifted up his hands on high." "Thou wentest forth for the salvation of thy people, even for salvation with thine anointed." "Thou didst walk through the sea with thine horses, through the heap of great waters" (Hab. iii. 8-15.)



Battle-axes.

CHAPTER XVI.

The Pharaoh of the Exodus—Egyptian Chronology—Records—Where and why Defective—Thotmes II.—His Queen—The Lessons taught the Israelites by the Plagues—River and Nature worship shunned, with some exceptions—Terror of the Nations—The Song of Moses and Miriam.

IN bringing to a close this brief notice of the plagues of Egypt, the question naturally arises, How is it that no distinct memorials of these stupendous events are to be found upon the monuments, in the sculptures, the inscriptions, and the papyri of ancient Egypt? The coincidences which have been pointed out, and the testimonies which have been adduced in the foregoing pages, are but indirectly and accidentally corroborative of the inspired history. In a country where, as has been shown, everything strange or unusual was observed and recorded with peculiar care, it might have been expected that such a history would occupy a very prominent place in the chronicles which have been preserved.

It is to be considered, however, that the Egyptians were a proud and boastful people. Their monuments were devoted to the description of those events only which were supposed to contribute to their national glory. They exalt and praise their gods, but never make mention of any affront or humiliation to which they may have been exposed. They celebrate

the triumphs of their kings, but take no notice of their defeats. They boast of all their successes, but pass over their failures in silence. The Greek and Latin historians, who derived their information from the priests of Egypt, could only describe what they themselves beheld, or what was told them by these guardians of the honour of their deities and kings. We have, therefore, no detailed account of those plagues which brought so much humiliation and disaster upon Egypt, upon its gods, and its people alike, except in the book of Exodus ; but the narrative there given is so circumstantial and so completely in accordance with what is known of the national characteristics of Egypt, its government, its religion, its popular customs, and also with its peculiarities of climate, its natural history, and a multitude of other circumstances of little apparent importance, that it is abundantly evident that no writer, who had not been an eye-witness and a participator in the events, could have presented such an account of them.

The date of the Exodus appears to be fixed by the notice in 1 Kings vi. 1, where it is stated to have taken place 480 years before the foundation of the temple in the fourth year of Solomon's reign (B.C. 1012). This points to the year B.C. 1492, or thereabouts, as the period of this history. Egyptian chronology is at present too uncertain to allow of any positive conclusion as to the king who then occupied the throne of Egypt, or the dynasty to which he belonged. This subject is discussed at length in an essay by Canon Cook on the Bearings of Egyptian

History upon the Pentateuch in the Speaker's Commentary. The balance of evidence seems to indicate Thotmes II., a prince of the eighteenth dynasty, as the Pharaoh of the Exodus. He came to the throne at a time of great national prosperity, and the inscriptions celebrate some successes at the beginning of his reign ; after which nothing more is heard of him ; and this silence is exactly what might be expected at a period of disaster and disgrace. A comparison of the following facts will throw some light upon the question.

The sacred narrative begins—"Now there arose up a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph" (Exod. i. 8). This new king was, in all probability, Amasis, an ancestor of Thotmes. He was emphatically "a new king," being an usurper, and the founder of a new dynasty. He did not succeed to the throne by inheritance, but "arose up over Egypt," driving out the reigning family, and establishing himself in the kingdom by conquest. He "knew not Joseph," nor the services which Joseph had rendered, being himself a stranger to the history and traditions of the country of which he had taken possession. It was his policy, like that of some modern potentates, to keep the people occupied with important works and enterprises, that they might not grow restless under his sway, and revolt against him. He set them, therefore, to build and fortify cities, to be used as depots of arms, provisions, and treasure. Upon these works not only foreigners and captives were employed, as was customary under former dynasties, but also the

Egyptians, who were treated at that time as a subject people. The account of Moses, whose history refers to Israel alone, is—"He said unto his people, Behold, the people of the children of Israel are more and mightier than we. Come now, let us deal wisely with them; lest they multiply, and it come to pass, that, when there falleth out any war, they join also unto our enemies, and fight against us, and so get them up out of the land. Therefore they did set over them taskmasters to afflict them with their burdens. And they built for Pharaoh treasure-cities, Pithom and Raamses" (Exod. i. 9-11). This may have been about 144 years before the date of the Exodus.

After Amasis, third in succession, was Thotmes I. He gained many victories, which are commemorated upon the monuments. He carried war into the neighbouring coasts of Canaan, and made his name and power feared by the nations round about. This would account for the consternation and alarm which fell upon them when they heard of another invasion from Egypt, and that by a people who had already vanquished the armies of that formidable nation. "Behold, there is a people come out of Egypt!" was the cry of Moab: "Now shall this company lick up all that are round about us, as the ox licketh up the grass of the field!" (Num. xxii. 4, 5). The metaphor of the ox may have been derived from the sacred bull of the Egyptians, to whose auspices the former victories of that people would naturally be attributed by a superstitious king like Balak; and the reply of Balaam in his "parable," where he describes the yet

greater power of the God of Israel, may have had a similar meaning—"God brought him forth out of Egypt: he hath, as it were, the strength of an unicorn" (Num. xxiv. 8).

Thotmes I. left a great and flourishing kingdom to his son, Thotmes II., the supposed Pharaoh of the Exodus. The first years of this prince were also prosperous; and if there had been any disposition on his part to cease from the vexatious policy of his predecessors, and to relax the burdens of his people, there was neither war abroad nor disturbance at home to prevent his doing so. But he appears to have been tyrannical and naturally hard of heart, and to have adopted the same counsel towards his subjects which led in later times to the division of the kingdom of Israel,—“My little finger shall be thicker than my father’s loins. Whereas my father did lade you with a heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke. My father hath chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions” (1 Kings xii. 11). The consequences were disastrous. Of the latter part of his life and reign there is no record upon any of the monuments; it is a complete blank. Neither the manner of his death nor the place of his burial are known; but it is certain that he died childless, and that immediately afterwards, all the nations which had previously been in subjection to Egypt revolted. The queen, his widow, who succeeded him upon the throne, made no effort to recover the possessions she had lost, or to subdue the people. It was a period of national humiliation. Egypt had neither money nor provisions,

neither arms nor soldiers, nor any of the necessary means for carrying on a war.

And such would necessarily be the condition of that country after the events of the Exodus. Pharaoh was overthrown with his hosts in the Red Sea (Ps. cxxxvi. 15). Such a death and such a burial-place would certainly not be commemorated by any public monument or inscription. "The first-born of Pharaoh that sat on his throne" had already perished, on the night of the Passover (Exod. xi. 5). The armies of Egypt were utterly destroyed; "The LORD overthrew the Egyptians in the midst of the sea; and the waters returned and covered the chariots, and the horsemen, and all the host of Pharaoh; there remained not so much as one of them" (Exod. xiv. 27, 28). The provisions of the land had been cut off by the several plagues—the murrain, the storm of hail and fire, and the locusts. The treasures, the jewels of silver and jewels of gold, had been given, with the prodigality of terror, to the departing Israelites. Egypt was now destitute of all things—"destroyed." For twenty years after the death of Thotmes II. the country is without history. The exploits of the kings who reigned before him, and of others who succeeded him, are recorded at length upon the monuments; but of this particular period there is no memorial whatever; and the total silence observed with respect to it is almost as eloquent as any description that could have been given of the disasters by which it was distinguished.

The queen who succeeded Thotmes was a mascu-

line woman, of strong passions, who would not have submitted quietly to any reverse if it had been possible for her to retrieve or avenge it. She was, moreover, a bigot in her religion, and "mad upon her idols," as is evident from her own inscriptions, which may still be seen upon the obelisk at Thebes. She speaks there of her favour with Ammon, boasts of her gracious and popular manners, and is represented in masculine apparel, and with a beard. It may be conceived how such a queen would influence the counsels of her weak and vacillating husband while he lived, urging him to break faith with Moses, and recall the concessions which he had made under pressure of the several plagues ; how the loss of her first-born, and only, son would incite her to urge forward the armies of Egypt in pursuit of the departing Israelites ; and how eagerly she would afterwards have renewed the attempt to overtake them, wandering in the wilderness, disheartened and disorganised, if she had not been utterly destitute of the means of doing so. Wanting these, she seems to have applied her energies to the restoration of her kingdom ; and, among other things recorded of her, is the significant fact that, soon after her husband's death, she imported a vast number of sycamore trees from Arabia Felix. The hail of the seventh plague, which "smote every tree of the field and brake every tree of the field," was particularly fatal to the sacred sycomores ; for, says the Psalmist, "he destroyed their vines with hail, and their sycamore trees with hailstones" (Ps. lxxviii. 47, marginal reading) ; and it was a characteristic act on the part

of this fanatical queen to replace them without delay. These coincidences are the more worthy of notice because it is tolerably certain that either this king, Thotmes II., was the Pharaoh of the Exodus, or another of somewhat later date, named Merneptah. One of these two must apparently have been contemporary with Moses, and in the absence of more positive evidence the facts above mentioned must be admitted to have considerable weight in identifying the former of them with this period.

The sojourning of the children of Israel in Egypt had continued four hundred years : it was now at an end. At the time when Moses was born they were a nation of bondsmen, bowed down both in mind and body, sunk in the lowest depths of misery and degradation. Oppressed by the command of Pharaoh, and the affliction being at the same time hastened forward by their taskmasters, they seem to have submitted, almost without complaint, to their hard destiny. If they groaned under their burden, it was in secret, not daring to offer any resistance to their tyrants ; but for the most part they seem to have become reconciled to their captivity, and to have hugged their chains. Moses found it difficult to excite in them any desire for freedom, and it was with danger to his life that he attempted it. They had forgotten the God of their fathers, and had to a great extent joined themselves to the idol-worshippers of Egypt.

But in all this estrangement God had not forgotten them. There was nothing in their conduct that deserved his favour ; but with everlasting kind-

ness he had mercy on them. If they had continued faithful to him he would doubtless have interposed sooner for their relief: even now they did not seek his face nor desire the knowledge of his ways; but he sought them; he opened before them the way of liberty, and raised their thoughts to desire it and prize it; and then he brought them forth that they might serve him.

As with nations, so it is with individuals. God does not send his gospel now to any for merits or deservings of their own: they do not seek him; but he seeks them; "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you" (John xv. 16). We are by nature dead in trespasses and sins, without one holy wish, one heavenly aspiration: and "God commendeth his love to us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for the ungodly" (Rom. v. 6). But when God has bestowed this gift of freedom upon his people, he requires that they should make a proper use of it. He does not deliver them from the bondage of Satan that they may live the rest of their lives in idleness or sin, but that they may be thenceforth purified unto himself, a peculiar people, zealous of good works. In Egypt, when he had appointed everything for the final departure of the Israelites, the command was given—"Sanctify unto me all the first-born: whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and beast, it is mine" (Exod. xiii. 2). Thus, when the first-born of Egypt are destroyed, the first-born of Israel are sanctified. As long as the Israelites were in bondage they offered no sacrifices

to God ; but as soon as they are set free they are to serve him : He is their God, and they must worship him ; He is their king, and they must obey him. This had been given to Moses from the first as the token of their adoption—"When thou hast brought forth the people of Israel out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain" (Exod. iii. 12) ; and accordingly upon that mountain God delivered the ten commandments of the law, reminding them at the same time how he had brought them out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage ; and renewing his covenant with them, that they should be "a peculiar treasure above all people, a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation" (Exod. xix. 6).

The signs and wonders which preceded their deliverance were intended not only as a reproof to the Egyptians but as a warning to Israel. "When thy judgments are upon the earth," saith Isaiah, "the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness" (Is. xxvi. 9) ; and such, St. John declares, will be the glorious and universal end of all God's visitations—"All nations shall come and worship before thee ; for thy judgments are made manifest" (Rev. xv. 4).

The several plagues of Egypt, while conveying by their distinctive character an appropriate rebuke to Pharaoh and his subjects, contained also a salutary lesson for the Israelites, and one which, as their subsequent history shows, was not entirely thrown away upon them. For instance:—the Egyptians worshipped the river Nile ; and other nations, Syrians, Greeks,

and Romans, held their own rivers sacred. But the Jews had seen the waters of the Nile changed into blood, and all the river deities—the crocodiles and sacred fish—destroyed. They remembered this judgment when they were come to Canaan; and with all their love for their own river Jordan, they never made an idol of it. Its waters divided for them to pass through, and they took up the stones out of its bed for a memorial; but the honour of the miracle was ascribed to God alone, the doer of it. It was a river almost as rich in blessing to the land of Canaan as the Nile to Egypt; so that Abraham, who had just come from that country with Lot, compared it to the river Nile for its fertilising properties,—“Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan that it was well watered everywhere, even as the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt” (Gen. xiii. 10). It was the scene of important national events, and the apparent cause of at least one miracle, for Naaman the Syrian, leaving his sacred rivers Abana and Pharpar, was cleansed in Jordan of his leprosy. Notwithstanding all these circumstances it was never held in any superstitious reverence. David calls it “the river of God, the streams whereof make glad the city of God” (Ps. xlv. 4); but none ever regarded it as itself a deity. This lesson they had learned in Egypt from the plague of blood; and all the superstitions of the neighbouring countries could not unteach them.

The same may be said of the plague of frogs, and of some others. However much the Israelites may

have been led away by the idolatrous practices of Egypt, they did not, in after times, adopt any of the lower order of animals as their deities: they did not reverence the frog, or the beetle, or the fishes, or the garden herbs, which had been held sacred in the land of their captivity.

On the other hand, it is evident, from the frequent mention of the high places on which the children of Israel burnt incense, that they had not forgotten the idolatrous reverence paid, in Egypt, to the sun and moon. They seem also to have adopted the horrible and barbarous practice, which they had perhaps witnessed in that country, and which prevailed also among the Canaanites, of offering human sacrifices. They "sacrificed their sons and daughters unto devils," says the Psalmist, "and shed innocent blood, the blood of their sons and of their daughters, to the idols of Canaan" (Ps. cvi. 37). It was from Egypt also that they derived the worship of the golden calf. They had witnessed the murrain by which the sacred cattle of Egypt had been destroyed; they had seen the boils and blains both upon man and beast, upon the worshipper and the worshipped, upon the people and their gods; they had been eye-witnesses of the judgment which Jehovah had executed upon these wretched deities: and yet they would have such to go before them; they desired to return into Egypt, and chose an Egyptian god to lead them thither. These things show how necessary it was for the Israelites that they should be forewarned and instructed, and how salutary was the lesson taught them by God's

dealings with Pharaoh. Though they had learnt that lesson imperfectly, it kept them back from many sins, and might, if they had properly considered it, have preserved them from all subsequent idolatries, and from every national disaster.

The history of all that Egypt had suffered was not without its intended result upon the nations round about. Its effect upon Balak and the Moabites has been already noticed. It went before the armies of Israel everywhere, and struck terror into the hearts of the Canaanites. "I know," said Rahab, to the spies in Jericho, "that the LORD hath given you the land, and that your terror is fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you. For we have heard how the LORD dried up the waters of the Red Sea for you when ye came out of Egypt" (Josh. ii. 9). "It came to pass when all the kings of the Amorites which were on the side of Jordan westward, and all the kings of the Canaanites which were by the sea, heard that the LORD had dried up the waters of Jordan from before the children of Israel, until they were passed over, that their heart melted, neither was there spirit in them any more, because of the children of Israel" (Josh. v. 1). The Gibeonites hastened to make peace with Joshua, "because of the name of the LORD thy God; for," said they, "we have heard the fame of him, and all that he did in Egypt" (ix. 9). In the battle at Aphek, when the ark of God was brought into the camp of the Hebrews, the Philistines were afraid, and said, "Woe unto us! who shall deliver us out of the hands of these mighty Gods?"

These are the Gods which smote the Egyptians with all their plagues in the wilderness!" (1 Sam. iv. 8).

Thus was fulfilled the promise of God to his people, "I will send my fear before thee" (Exod. xxiii. 27). "I will put the dread of thee and the fear of thee upon the nations that are under the whole heaven, who shall hear reports of thee, and shall tremble and be in anguish because of thee" (Deut. ii. 25).

The descent into the Red Sea is commemorated by St. Paul as a type of baptism. All our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea, and were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea" (1 Cor. x. 2). The Israelites began from that period a new national life: they were born again as a people, and called to serve God, to obey his laws, and to inherit the land which he had promised them. The song of Moses and the answer of Miriam express their sense of this relationship. It was a national anthem, a confession of faith. The people were now convinced of the power and goodness of Jehovah—"Then believed they his words; they sang his praise" (Ps. cvi. 12). We have many instances of such triumphant songs in Scripture, and of dances also. "Let them praise his name in the dance," says the Psalmist. "Let them sing praises unto him with the timbrel and harp" (cxlix. 3). "Let them give thanks whom the Lord hath redeemed" (cvii. 2).

An example of such glorious psalmody is given in the Apocalypse, with special reference to the miraculous deliverance of Israel at the Red Sea. "I

saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire ; and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God. And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty ; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name ? ” (Rev. xv. 2-4).

This should be the feeling and impulse of all God's people. God has overthrown the enemies of his church : the gospel of Jesus Christ proclaims the opening of the prison-house and liberty to the captives. We are to confess his power, and to devote our freedom to his service. It was for this that he redeemed us. Being made free from sin, we are become the servants of righteousness (Rom. vi. 18). The command is given to us as it was to Moses, and we should recognise it as our highest privilege and duty—“ After thou art come forth out of Egypt, thou shalt serve me. ”

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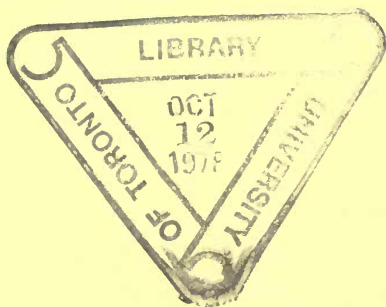
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